

RAGHAVAN IYER

# THE MORAL AND POLITICAL WRITINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, THE UNIVERSITY  
OF TORONTO, AND EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS







THE  
MORAL AND POLITICAL  
WRITINGS OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI

VOI UME III



MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

THE  
MORAL AND POLITICAL  
WRITINGS OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI

VOLUME III

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Non-Violent Resistance  
and  
Social Transformation

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Edited by  
RAGHAVAN IYER

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To  
Shri S. S. Aiyer  
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Shrimati Lakshmi Iyer

# Plan of the Series

## *Volume One*

### Civilization, Politics, and Religion

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- I Introduction
- II Gandhi on Himself and His Mission
- III Influences and Books Read
- IV *Hind Swaraj*, Modern Civilization, and Moral Progress
- V Politics and Religion
- VI Religion
- VII God

## *Volume Two*

### Truth and Non-Violence

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- V *Satya* Absolute and Relative Truth
- VI *Ahimsa* The Scope and Power of Non-Violence
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## *Volume Three*

### Non-Violent Resistance and Social Transformation

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- IV *Swadeshi* Self-Reliance
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## Preface

Despite the vast amount of proliferating literature on Mahatma Gandhi, there has as yet been no accessible and coherent record of his essential writings. During his lifetime he wrote weekly articles for the journals he edited *Indian Opinion*, *Young India*, *Harijan*, and *Navajivan*. He was also unusually conscientious about replying to all of his correspondents in South Africa, England, India, and elsewhere, writing as many as seventy letters a day for over four decades. The enormous quantity of his correspondence is the main reason why his *Collected Works* (initiated by the Indian Government soon after his death and now drawing to its completion) has run into ninety volumes. His actual books were few, short, and somewhat inconclusive *Hind Swaraj*, *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, and *Ashram Observances in Action*, together with small tracts on the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Constructive Programme, and on health. His unfinished autobiography and several popular biographies remain the chief and rather misleading sources of public knowledge about the personality and impact of Gandhi. While a significant number of mostly perfunctory or fragmentary anthologies have been published, they have largely obscured the richness of his thought.

On the suggestion of G. D. H. Cole, John Plamenatz, and others at Oxford, I began my research into Gandhi's unpublished writings in 1946 when hardly two volumes of the *Collected Works* had appeared. Fortunately, Professor K. Swaminathan was persuaded by Vinoba Bhave to undertake the editorship and production of the *Collected Works*. Professor Swaminathan willingly assumed this onerous task and recently completed it with extraordinary patience, scrupulousness, and care. With his generous help, I was able to consult the corpus of materials in his office and in several libraries. This enabled me to complete *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, published by Oxford University Press in 1956.

Since then, it has become evident that Gandhi has been most inadequately represented by the older anthologies. In

attempting to rescue Gandhi's essential writings from the wealth of detail (and ephemera) in the *Collected Works*, I realized that there was no way of doing justice to the subtlety and scope of Gandhi's thought in less than three volumes of materials drawn from the entire corpus. It became necessary to sift every volume of the *Collected Works* and apply the most stringent criteria to produce a comprehensive, balanced, and accessible collection. While the materials selected rely on the definitive versions of the *Collected Works*, there are minor modifications. The entries are given apt titles, and the original titles provided by Gandhi or his associates are cited at the end of each entry. Footnotes have been kept to a bare minimum so that the reader is unencumbered by extraneous detail in reading the texts. The selections drawn from the entire life-work of Gandhi are organized under self-explanatory heads. They show the refinement of his thought over many years and also the underlying consistency of his commitments and perspectives.

This three-volume collection could help a variety of people in different countries including India itself to form a fuller and more just appreciation of Gandhi's significant and compelling contribution to the twentieth century and to the future.

R N I



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I am grateful to the Navajivan Press, for permission to use materials from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (90 volumes); to Professor K. Swaminathan, for valuable suggestions concerning this three-volume edition; to Professors Kilian Coster and Elton Hall, for their generous help in preparing this volume; to Ruth Ahlroth and Paula Kelly, for their enormous help in preparing the materials for publication; and to the editorial staff of Oxford University Press.



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# Abbreviations

CWMG	<i>The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi</i> (ninety volumes), Publications Division, Government of India.
CW	Archives of the Office of the Collected Works, New Delhi.
G.	Originally written or spoken in Gujarati.
GN	Gandhi Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
H.	Originally written or spoken in Hindi.
Hu.	Originally written or spoken in Hindustani.
MMU	Mobile Microfilm Unit, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and Sangrahalaya, New Delhi.
SN	Sabarmati Sangrahalaya, Ahmedabad.
SWMG	<i>Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi</i> , Natesan, Madras.



# I

## Introduction

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*Satyagraha* and *sarvodaya* were Mahatma Gandhi's most significant and revolutionary contributions to contemporary political thought. The fundamental concepts of *satya* and *ahimsa*, truth and non-violence, can be found in the world's major religious and philosophical traditions; Gandhi's originality lay in the way he fused them in both theory and practice. His doctrines of *satyagraha* or non-violent resistance and *sarvodaya* or universal welfare were at once the logical corollaries of his fundamental premisses about human perfectibility, and the mature fruit of his repeated experiments with political action and social reform. If absolute values can never be upheld on utilitarian grounds, adherence to them can none the less lead to desirable results which may be extolled in the language of expediency. Whilst speaking of *satya* in the language of faith, even in terms of total conviction, Gandhi often advocated *ahimsa* as a creed, regardless of results, though capable at times of producing concrete advantages.

Since the doctrine of *satyagraha* is a comprehensive social and political application of *satya* and *ahimsa*, it inevitably reflects the deontic logic of those metaphysical conceptions. On the one hand, *satyagraha* is an ethical imperative: one cannot justifiably claim to adhere to *ahimsa* and *a fortiori* to *satya* without making appropriate efforts to apply *satyagraha* to social conflicts. In this sense, *satyagraha* connotes 'truth-force', the luminous power of truth directed towards the promotion of social welfare. At the same time, however, because it confronts injustice and its attendant hostility through an effective appeal to conscience, *satyagraha* is a policy for action and a stimulus for social reform. In this sense, it is 'non-violent resistance'. These two dimensions of *satyagraha* are indivisible aspects of a single standpoint, for truth-force is a ceaseless witness to justice in its transcendental and immanent implications, and it must resist injustice whenever and wherever it

occurs. Just as light by its presence delimits darkness and makes it evident, so the *satyagrahi* by his suffering exposes injustice around him. And just as light dispels shadows, yet destroys nothing, so the *satyagrahi* dissolves injustice without harming its agents.

Although Gandhi employed the phrase 'passive resistance' during his earliest campaigns in South Africa, he was dissatisfied with it. The moral strength that is inherent in the immortal soul, which is essentially rooted in the Divine (*sat*), spontaneously released by an awakened conscience and directed by reason to reveal a persistent social grievance, is in no sense passive. The term 'passive' implies impotence of spiritual will and political initiative. Passive resistance was often the last resort of those who had no power whatsoever. The combination of political weakness with psychological resentment implied in the phrase 'passive resistance' was basically incompatible with Gandhi's abiding convictions. People are politically weak, he held, not because they lack weapons or votes, but because they lack ethical direction. Weapons and votes can never compensate for moral confusion. Gandhi could sympathize with the earnest revolutionary committed to the abolition of an exploitative social system, but he saw no merit in mere destruction. Nor was he concerned to replace one set of misguided rulers and coercive instruments with a rival group of power-seekers. If voluntary social workers could achieve strength through fidelity to *satya* and *ahimsa*, while innovating constructive experiments with social transformation, they would gain sufficient authority from popular support to challenge the entrenched powers.

For Gandhi, short-term social reforms bring about changes which do not necessarily elevate the ethical tone of individuals or institutions and are, therefore, doomed to fail. *Satyagraha*, as a method of social change, attempts to raise the welfare of all and to initiate a radical alteration in people and governments. It must be judged without narrow temporal constraints. It is better to establish the foundation for a genuine and lasting good that may not be apparent for decades than to produce some dramatic change that will be eroded or subverted within a few years. Gandhi was therefore much less concerned with the quantity of people involved in *satyagraha*



than with their quality: he even went so far as to claim that if the masses became *satyagrahis* in British India, *swaraj* or self-rule would be attained in one year. And he was convinced that if a single individual could become an exemplary *satyagrahi*, subtle changes would ultimately result and be more far-reaching than massive demonstrations based on impetuous enthusiasm and latent violence. Unlike the enduring alchemy of *satya* and *ahimsa*, the outcome of hypocrisy and violence is demoralizing and short-lived.

Gandhi firmly believed that *satyagraha* was the most powerful conceivable force for social weal. It was therefore also the most hazardous, to be used only with wise deliberation. Recognizing this need for caution, and holding that numbers are not in themselves significant, he came to stress the strict preconditions that must govern non-violent resistance.<sup>1</sup> Thus he called off *satyagraha* campaigns even when successful in effect because they were impure in intention. He was also unwilling to take advantage of his antagonists in times of difficulty. *Satyagraha* cannot be grasped in utilitarian terms. But when rightly understood and properly executed, its effects are both predictable and precise. Duration alone remains the crucial variable, the length of time required for victory depends upon the number and quality of *satyagrahis* involved. For Gandhi, failure is the fault not of *satyagraha*, which is invincible, but of an impure motive or an inauthentic application.

Since 'the exercise of the purest soul-force in its perfect form brings about instantaneous relief',<sup>2</sup> a *satyagrahi* needs to assimilate fully the prerequisites for its practice and develop the moral courage and political will to fulfil them. The *satyagrahi* does not see himself as starting from a position of inferiority or bondage; his stance is that of a free man. 'A *satyagrahi* enjoys a degree of freedom not possible for others, for he becomes a truly fearless person.'<sup>3</sup> His fearlessness is unqualified because it has crushed the root of all irrational anxieties, the deep-seated fear of death. The *satyagrahi*'s readiness to die

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed consideration, see *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, chapter 11.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Theory and Practice of Passive Resistance', *Indian Opinion*, Golden Number, 1 Dec. 1914.

<sup>3</sup> 'Secret of *Satyagraha*', *Indian Opinion*, 22 Feb. 1908.

though like Socrates, he in no way desires to die- prepares him to face deprivation and suffering. Whether rich or poor, he is indifferent to wealth, since his loyalty to truth forbids any form of idolatry. Similarly, he revalues family attachments so that bonds of affection do not overshadow his commitment to truth. In renouncing tyranny he refuses to be tyrannized, and refrains from judging success and failure by the fickle declarations of others. Yet, though the freedom gained by enacting true *satyagraha* assures sublime contentment, it is by no means easily won. 'Men of great physical strength are rare. Rarer still must be those who derive their strength from truth.'<sup>4</sup>

The inherently individual and internal roots of *satyagraha* led Gandhi to elaborate the image of the ideal *satyagrahi* and to derive from this model the characteristics of broader *satyagraha* movements. A person grounded in *satyagraha* will in any campaign master the details of moral protocol. Harsh words are inadmissible, as is rudeness. When *satyagrahis* oppose a specifiable set of injustices, they must resist the 'intoxication of power' and not confuse it with moral authority. They must help officials perform those duties which are free from the taint of injustice. They must never revile even their antagonists and critics, and they must not accept ready compliance. They should request, or expect, only minimal assistance, and in return they should use their free time to assist the local community in ameliorating social conditions. Even while *satyagrahis* seek to demonstrate to the government that civil resistance arises out of respect for law and for persons and constitutes no threat to public order, they must win the goodwill of the general population by working to give more than they receive. *Satyagraha* as an ideal may seem almost impossibly difficult to implement, yet it is, in fact, a familiar practice in family life. Members within a family often cheerfully endure untidy and even unjust situations. Through voluntary suffering the insensitive and the selfish may, surprisingly, be converted.

Gandhi recognized that the credibility of resistance based on declared moral principles is maintained only so long as conduct, unconditionally if imperfectly, adheres to those principles. Any gap between intention and conduct leaves the civil

<sup>4</sup> 'Who Can Offer *Satyagraha*', *Indian Opinion*, 29 May 1909

resister open to charges of duplicity or hypocrisy. For civil resistance to merit the title, the *satyagrahi* can feel no anger and no violence towards his oppressor, however much he may be assaulted. His refusal to resist arrest testifies to his loyalty to law, just as his civil disobedience bears witness to injustice. While uncompromisingly condemning injustice, he will never presume to judge the doer, for he knows that oppressor and oppressed alike are victims of an unjust system. Thus non-retaliation is the guiding principle of civil resistance. Gandhi justified non-violent resistance by appealing to an alchemical analogy:

My non-resistance is active resistance in a different plane. Non-resistance to evil does not mean absence of any resistance whatsoever but it means not resisting evil with evil but with good. Resistance, therefore, is transferred to a higher and absolutely effective plane.<sup>5</sup>

Differences of context might require differences of expression of *satyagraha*, but they could in no way justify the adoption of procedures and principles opposed to truth and non-violence. Since the theoretical basis of *satyagraha* is universal in its application, no limits can be set in advance to its efficacy. Mature judgements are always needed to determine who is the right person in the right place to do the right thing. Though all human beings could learn *satyagraha*, its actual exercise in domestic or public arenas was, Gandhi knew, strictly limited by the adequate preparation and training of aspiring *satyagrahis*. To involve masses of individuals in fiery ordeals for which they are not prepared internally is only to tempt them to violence or *duragraha*, and thus to betray the cause of truth.

Gandhi's unremitting concern with the purity and precision of every act of civil resistance occasionally frustrated his followers, for he would halt a campaign if he perceived the potential for violence. If the *satyagrahi* is free to act because he is fearless, those against whom civil resistance is undertaken must be free to respond. If *satyagraha* inspires fear, its victims will react strongly to perceived threats. Only a government or institution which sees no cause for fear will respond with civility. Gandhi therefore recognized the need to remove fear

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Wilhelm Wartenberg, CWMG, Vol. XX, p. 513

from all kinds of interaction, and, since civil resisters were forcing an issue, the onus of dispelling fear lay with them. But the *satyagrahi* can hardly disabuse his opponent of fear, until he has purged himself of it. Gandhi felt that the surest way to banish fear was to demonstrate a greater willingness to suffer than to cause suffering. Coercion in all its forms—psychological as well as physical—had to be eliminated from the *satyagrahi*'s strategy.

Civil disobedience includes many forms of non-compliance, but its most significant application is the deliberate defiance, on moral grounds, of particular laws. For Gandhi, 'civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He does not give it up without ceasing to be a man.'<sup>6</sup> This basic right of the citizen is co-extensive with the duty of an individual to resist complicity in injustice and untruth, however sanctioned by public institutions. Gandhi held that the State, unlike a human being, is soulless and unguided by conscience. At best, it represents the efforts of legal authorities to establish external compliance within a complex network of social relations. States can claim no more finality or infallibility than any individual can.

Owing to the potent forces surrounding a public defiance of the law, Gandhi held that even individual civil disobedience in the public interest could be undertaken only after extensive preparation and as a last resort. As for mass civil disobedience, it could not, he thought, be an authentic form of *satyagraha* if it was engineered by only a handful of leaders. It must, rather, arise as a natural response to widespread moral distress. Even then, civil disobedience may give way to criminal disobedience and violence. Civil disobedience was for Gandhi not an exhilarating or emotive response to injustice, but a solemn undertaking only to be attempted with calm deliberation and a clear resolve to benefit others.

The exercise of *satyagraha* through non-co-operation, while still requiring careful preparation, could be best practised by the masses. Non-co-operation involves the withdrawal by individuals of allegiance and support from various public institutions. This may involve such measures as repudiating titles and privileges, withdrawing children from schools sponsored

<sup>6</sup> 'The Immediate Issue', *Young India*, 5 Jan. 1922

by governmental agencies, declining to participate in legislatures, and substituting private arbitration of civil disputes for public legal proceedings. None of these responses involves the defiance or breaking of a specific law. For where civil disobedience implies a direct confrontation with State authority, non-co-operation involves a voluntary effort to purify the soul by disassociating it from evil. Since Gandhi equated the element of self-purification in non-co-operation with the preservation of self-respect, he held that there was nothing negative about non-co-operation. Beyond its external capacity to bring government and institutions to a halt, it was, he believed, a therapeutic means for the release of truth-force that can reform and regenerate social institutions.

Gandhi envisaged the Constructive Programme as the indispensable positive component in the systematic practice of *satyagraha*. The Constructive Programme is the long-term prerequisite of a system of non-violent self-rule, without which political power or formal independence would prove to be a sham. The Constructive Programme included individual and collective efforts on behalf of unity between diverse religious communities, the removal of social abuses such as untouchability, programmes of rural education and reconstruction, the decentralization of production and distribution, schemes for the improvement of health, sanitation, and diet, the promotion of local handicrafts, and, in general, concerted work by all to promote the common good.

Thirty-four years of continuous experience in experimenting in truth and non-violence have convinced me that non-violence cannot be sustained unless it is linked to body-labour and finds expression in our daily contacts with our neighbours. This is the Constructive Programme.<sup>7</sup>

Gandhi held that the Constructive Programme could not only generate a vast reservoir of non-violent energy, but could also serve as the basis of moral authority and even political power. He thought that much of the energy expended on behalf of external political ends was in fact wasted, and would be far better used by earnest *satyagrahis* in the immense project

of social reform and public service. Whilst civil disobedience and other forms of resistance could advance social amelioration, they could not establish the firm foundation for a general and continuous improvement of society or for the full realization of economic, social, and moral freedom. While acknowledging the possibility of a division of labour for the sake of efficiency, Gandhi rejected any sharp separation between so-called political programmes and the Constructive Programme. It is, he thought, the judicious combination of constructive work and effective resistance that makes *satyagraha* radically subversive of all forms of élitist politics. He urged volunteers in the Constructive Programme to occupy themselves with that neglected work which brings neither fame nor power. Those resisters who courted imprisonment he valued less highly than those who simply surrendered themselves to constructive work. All political work fell for him within the Constructive Programme and its merit could be judged only in terms of lasting social transformation.

Freedom for Gandhi was neither a condition granted by some social contract nor a gratuitous privilege; freedom was grounded in the moral autonomy of the individual and was thus inalienable. Furthermore, freedom he saw as a social necessity which cannot be severed from its roots in the individual psyche; only a society based on some minimal degree of awakened individual conscience can sustain itself for long. Freedom as an inherent characteristic of human nature is true *swaraj* or self-rule. The social and institutional dimensions of *swaraj* are enormously dependent upon the individual dimension. Thus, while *swaraj* is open equally to individuals and to groups, its first step lies in individual consciousness. National self-rule has the same exacting requirements for its nurture and sustenance as individual self-rule. 'The outward freedom therefore that we shall attain will only be in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment.'<sup>8</sup> In the intermediate structures between the village and all humanity, Gandhi perceived a variety of possible patterns of voluntary association. He could not, however, view the nation-state as a necessary member of the series.

While nation-states have come to claim sovereignty and a special status, they are in no way sacrosanct.

At any level of collective action, the degree of freedom realized is a function both of confident self-rule and non-violent co-operation with other communities and associations. Gandhi held that there was a subtle interconnection between the *swaraj* or self-government realized by any political community and the *swaraj* of the individuals who emerge as moral leaders and social reformers. Since individual human beings alone are moral agents capable of exercising truth-force, all notions of collective *swaraj* are derivative and reflect the sum totals of individual growth. Collective authorities and agencies can neither confer *swaraj* upon awakened individuals, nor withhold it from them. Nor can they legitimately claim to dictate its meaning and content. Yet social and political institutions can create a climate within which individuals may promote their own realization of *swaraj*.

*Swaraj* in its fullest sense is perfect freedom from all bondage and, for Gandhi, it could be equated with *moksha* or liberation. But, like that knowledge which can be gained even as one becomes increasingly aware of the scope of one's ignorance, *swaraj* is attainable by degrees so long as its achievements are measured honestly against ideals. This is possible because *swaraj* on the individual level involves perforce self-awareness and conscious choice. Only fearlessness permits the *satyagrahi* to substitute intelligent and responsible choice for the illusion of choosing, to become actor rather than reactor. '*Swaraj*', Gandhi once wrote, 'is the abandonment of the fear of death'.<sup>9</sup> *Swaraj* is vitally connected with the capacity for dispassionate self-assessment, ceaseless self-purification, continuous self-restraint, progressive self-realization, and growing *swadeshi* or self-reliance. Gandhi's metaphysical presuppositions, together with his long experience amongst unlettered peasants, convinced him that moral advancement and social rejuvenation are interdependent, and that individual and national evolution could be furthered simultaneously.

Owing to the necessary connection between individual and national *swaraj*, self-rule is incompatible with every form of exploitation. For Gandhi, common sense dictated that 'when

you demand *swaraj*, you do not want *swaraj* for yourself alone, but for your neighbour, too'.<sup>10</sup> *Swaraj* which is the hallmark of the free individual is the basis for communitarian *swaraj*, which in turn lays the foundation for national *swaraj*, which could, in its turn, in a world dedicated to *satya* and *ahimsa*, become the basis of global *swaraj*, a universal *Ramarajya* or golden age. Whilst there is a logical order of priority within the process of attaining *swaraj*, the inherent exploitation of dependence within a pyramidal hierarchy can be countered by the increased interdependence generated through *swadeshi*. Since self-rule suggests self-reliance, each unit in this expanding circle must stand on its own moral worth and lend strength to the others. The vampirical spectre of centralized government must give way to a decentralized confederation of village republics.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness.<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi viewed the struggle for independence, or national *swaraj*, from the broader perspective of ideal *swaraj*. He was hardly interested in independence for its own sake. Only through national self-rule, he believed, India could become an active champion of international co-operation and global interdependence. Enslaving millions, the British Raj had pre-



vented them from making a vital contribution to the universal *swaraj* of humanity. Gandhi flatly rejected any continuance of alien rule on the ground that it was demoralizing to the ruled. The oppressed had to endure indirect complicity with imperial iniquity, whilst seeing their own legitimate aspirations persistently frustrated. At the same time, however, Gandhi could not set great store by political independence alone; authentic *swaraj*, he felt, could originate only at the individual and village level. Just as individual *swaraj* involves a constant process of self-purification, so national *swaraj* requires national self-purification — the removal of social abuses, the elimination of economic exploitation, the transcendence of religious differences, the inauguration of spiritual rebirth, the radical reconstruction of internal structures, and the comprehensive reform of an entire social system. Whilst castigating imperial rule, Gandhi also identified the weaknesses that Indians themselves would have to overcome in order to realize true *swaraj*.

*Swadeshi*, self-reliance, was for Gandhi an integral component of *swaraj*. Just as *satya* and *ahimsa* can be taken as absolute values, although *ahimsa* is logically dependent upon *satya*, so *swadeshi* follows logically from *swaraj*. *Swaraj* can be derived from *satya* (for self-rule is the expression of the intrinsic truth of the individual) and *swadeshi* can be derived from *ahimsa* (for complete non-violence requires full self-reliance). As a validating principle *swaraj* is prior to *swadeshi*, though in daily practice *swadeshi* provides the measure of realized *swaraj*. If *swaraj* is the individual and national goal, *swadeshi* is collective strength. By 'self-reliance', Gandhi did not intend to suggest any romantic notion of 'rugged individualism', but rather an active force only partially captured in phrases like 'self-help' and 'self-dependence'. He preferred the English term 'self-reliance' because it suggests an effort to do what one can for oneself, whilst leaving plenty of room for mutual assistance. Ultimately, Gandhi could see no real distinction between ethical self-transformation and working for the welfare of all.

The freedom of the *satyagrahi* is reflected in the collapse of an exaggerated contrast between selfishness and altruism, which is based upon *attavada*, 'the dire heresy of separateness'. In the selfless service (*anasakti yoga*) enjoined by the *Bhagavad Gita*, serving the needs of others is commensurate with nurtur-

ing the essential nature of the self. 'This religious standpoint can be translated into an economic programme: produce as much as possible for local consumption, and barter the rest for necessities. Gandhi was willing to go as far as needed to obtain essential goods, but no farther than was strictly required. Consumer economics not only encouraged mass poverty; it was also a social disease. Thus *swadeshi* could be rendered 'patriotism' in a political, and '*dharma*' in a moral, context. Fusing these contexts, Gandhi revealed new dimensions in both. '*Swadeshi* is service, and if we understand its nature we shall simultaneously benefit ourselves, our families, our country and the world.'<sup>12</sup> In the protracted struggle for *swaraj*, Gandhi continually sought to give emphasis to the principle of *swadeshi* through his insistence upon the Constructive Programme, the revitalization of *panchayats*, the development of indigenous institutions of new education or *nai talim*, and the emergence of village industries through the use of the spinning wheel or *charkha*. Though willing to defend each of these programmes on its own merits, he consistently held that Indian *swaraj* could have no lasting foundation without the systematic application of *swadeshi*.

As with the principle of non-violence, each proposed application of *swadeshi* should be examined in relation to the principle of *satya* or truth. Such judgements are amenable to self-correction as long as one is ready to engage in daily self-examination and mental purgation. Specific means of attaining *swadeshi* must likewise be assessed in terms of their fidelity to the ideal of *swaraj*, authentic freedom. The pursuit of *swaraj* through *swadeshi*, like the pursuit of *satya* through *ahimsa*, is a matter of individual judgement based upon appeals to conscience and experience. The attainment of *swaraj* through *swadeshi* cannot come about if some areas of life are considered irrelevant. Gandhi rejected the division of life into separate and discrete compartments, and continually sought open-textured approaches that honoured the interdependence of different modes and means to a single long-term goal.

Gandhi's concept of *satya*, with *ahimsa* as the means, gave rise to his complex doctrine of *satyagraha*; his concept of *ahimsa*,

with *satya* as the common goal, enabled him to develop the doctrine of *sarvodaya* or non-violent socialism. Self-dependence, when rightly understood and embodied, becomes the crucial lever for non-violent social transformation. 'Self-dependence is a necessary ideal so long as, and to the extent that it is an aid to one's self-respect and spiritual discipline.'<sup>13</sup> It is not an end in itself, for those who become responsible through moral and spiritual renewal become the quickeners who can awaken a new impulse in the hidden depths of social life. Though he had no detailed plan for social transformation, Gandhi cherished the ideal of *Ramarajya* at the heart of his political vision, and firmly believed that *ahimsa* would eventually win global acceptance as a universal criterion of civilized life. This conviction, coupled with his faith in the magical power of millions striving in a common cause, gave him a clear, if intuitive, sense of direction.

*Sarvodaya* was predicated upon the diffusion of power, yoked to a firm recognition of the moral priority of social virtue over sectional interest. Competition must make way for concord. To be effective, this shift in social and political perspective must be understood as a spiritual requirement in a civilized world, a revolutionary enterprise which would eventually benefit all humanity. As a macrocosm of the individual seeker, society as a whole must come to renounce everything not supported by the concept of mutual responsibility. In practical terms, therefore, pioneering witnesses to truth and non-violence are obliged to teach through example the necessity of shifting the axis of social life from an aggressive emphasis on rights to an active concern with obligations. They must exemplify a spirit of fellowship that has nothing to do with levelling up or down, since each person's *dharma* is unique to himself. They must also renounce the material and psychological exploitation that cause poverty. The votaries of *sarvodaya* need not repudiate the innovativeness of the technological age, but they must shun soulless mechanization and trivial gadgetry.

The production, preservation, and distribution of goods may be likened to the circulation of blood in the body. Generally, 'the concentration of blood at one spot is harmful

to the body and, similarly, concentration of wealth at any one place proves to be the nation's undoing'.<sup>14</sup> Employing this organic metaphor, Gandhi envisaged a radical reformulation of the elusive conception of collective welfare. Unlike utilitarians, he was unwilling to accept the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number. Instead he pleaded for a more synergistic conception of collective welfare, wherein the suffering of the least and the lowest inevitably interacts with the supposed well-being of the most prosperous so as to negate completely the alleged social value of such prosperity. He saw collective social welfare as a chain no stronger than its weakest link. At the same time, he held that the contributions of individuals to social welfare were not restricted in principle by their intellectual, economic, social, or political status, although, to be sure, the possession of enough resources could help individuals move beyond greed and engage in service. Gandhi favoured the development of a true science of economics, based upon the principle of *sarvodaya* and directed towards an intelligent regulation of the flow of wealth. He defined the health of this flow in terms of justice, and proposed as a criterion for justice in economic exchange the principle that 'a just wage for a worker will be that which will secure him the same labour, when he needs it, as he has put in for us today'.<sup>15</sup>

Rejecting every form of exploitation and viewing all human beings as equal sacrificers for the welfare of all, Gandhi sought to lay the basis for a redistribution of wealth that would be consistent with the sacrificial moral order (*dharma*) of the cosmos. However inequitable the distribution of material and mental resources among human beings, he believed that men and women could act as trustees, rather than as owners, of their resources, and could thus consider themselves as the partners of all their fellows in society. He had no objection to a large measure of society's wealth flowing through the hands of individuals, but he warned that this involved a moral temptation and a spiritual trial which would require a deliberate vow of non-possession and a self-conscious adoption of the principle of trusteeship. He advised every individual to weigh his cir-

<sup>14</sup> 'Sarvodaya', *Indian Opinion*, 20 June 1908

<sup>15</sup> 'Sarvodaya', *Indian Opinion*, 4 July 1908

cumstances in the court of conscience according to the criteria of truth and non-violence and the obligations of *sarvodaya*. Such a radical redefinition of both the means and the ends of production could serve as the basis of a fundamental reform of society.

Through a revolutionary change in attitudes towards consumption, wealth, and work, the votary of *sarvodaya* could reverse the rising tide of personal expectations and mitigate the misery of poverty. Gandhi did not believe that the intelligentsia and their theories were capable of raising the lot of the toiling masses; all too often, indeed, the lives of privileged classes and even armchair revolutionaries were based upon cultivated hypocrisy. Gandhi therefore advised political workers to immerse themselves in the Constructive Programme, to engage in 'bread labour', and to sacrifice their comforts wholeheartedly in the service of *Dandananarayan*, God in the form of the poor.

If only individuals would incarnate the principles of *sarvodaya*, he knew they would find innumerable opportunities for service in the performance of *svadharma*. Anyone may nurture the spirit of *yajna* or sacrifice in his own immediate sphere of obligation. For Gandhi, the path of universal service involves a non-violent socialism devoid of scapegoats and rooted in a sense of mutual trust between all classes of society. *Sarvodaya* or non-violent socialism requires neither inevitable class war nor violent expropriation of property in the name of social welfare. Capitalism, socialism, and communism, insisted Gandhi, are alike pervaded by violence and based upon a rigid assumption of human selfishness. He could commend the Marxian ideal of non-possession of property, but he could not accept Marx's narrow interpretations of human life and history. Nor was he willing to accept the proposition that a few revolutionary cadres could enduringly and beneficently transform the social order by politicizing the masses and polarizing them against any set of designated oppressors.

Instead of doctrinal isms or dogmas about historical inevitability, Gandhi addressed himself to the individual integration of precept and practice. He spoke of socialism of the heart and the soul. And he was inwardly sure that the capacity of individuals to contribute to social amelioration is a direct

function of their spiritual strength and moral authority, achieved through sacrificial action (*anasakti yoga*).

Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. That is socialism. In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity. . . . This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end.<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi was deeply concerned with the entrenched tendency of State power to degenerate into active violence, but he was equally concerned lest human beings repudiate their humanity and lose their souls through abdicating individual moral responsibility for the sake of the Leviathan. The onus of responsibility for human life and universal welfare lies with the conscience of individuals, and it is a dangerous delusion to suppose that a human being can relinquish any portion of this responsibility in the name of social contract or legal sovereignty, tacit consent or rule of law. Nor can any moral agent give unconditional consent, for any reason, to the general body of laws, pronouncements, and programmes of any political institution. The freedom of the individual to serve universal welfare (*sarvodaya*) must be perpetually preserved in principle against all the claims of State authority. Only thus may society be forever assured of the regenerating influence of truth-force. The ultimate political ideal for Gandhi was

a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler. He will conduct himself in such a way that his behaviour will not hamper the well-being of his neighbours. In such an ideal state there will be no political institution and therefore no political power.<sup>17</sup>

Though such a stateless society seems a remote ideal in a world of institutionalized violence, authentic progress along these lines depends upon the private and potent resolves of men and women of courageous compassion and calm deter-

mination who search within themselves for the seeds of wisdom and strength.

Euclid has defined a straight line as having no breadth, but no one has yet succeeded in drawing such a line and no one ever will. Still we can progress in geometry only by postulating such a line. This is true of every ideal. . . . The only way is for those who believe in it to set the example.<sup>18</sup>

To acknowledge the continual relevance of pioneers such as Gandhi is to awaken the potential for growth in oneself. Once the inward source of strength is touched, the long journey of individual and social regeneration may begin. Faith can repeatedly triumph over fear, never more so than in times of trial.

## II

# *Satyagraha*—Non-Violent Resistance

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### § 1. Passive Resistance

#### 1. THE LOGIC OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

The principle of State necessity can bind only those men to disobey God's law who, for the sake of worldly advantages, try to reconcile the irreconcilable; but a Christian, who sincerely believes that the fulfilment of Jesus' teaching shall bring him salvation, cannot attach any importance to this principle Tolstoy

David Thoreau was a great writer, philosopher, poet, and withal a most practical man, that is, he taught nothing he was not prepared to practise in himself. He was one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced. At the time of the abolition of slavery movement, he wrote his famous essay 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'. He went to gaol for the sake of his principles and suffering humanity. His essay has, therefore, been sanctified by suffering. Moreover, it is written for all time. Its incisive logic is unanswerable. During the last week of October—a month of sore temptation to Asiatic passive resisters, whose silent suffering has now reached the whole civilized world—we present the following extracts from Thoreau's essay. The original occupies a little over thirty pages of a pocket book and has been published by Mr. Arthur C. Fifield of 44 Fleet Street, London, in his beautiful 'Simple Life' series, at 3d.

#### THE EXTRACTS

I heartily accept the motto: 'That government is best which governs least', and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe: 'That government is best which governs not at all'; and



when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it.

'For Passive Resisters'

*Indian Opinion*, 26 Oct 1907

## 2. PASSIVE RESISTANCE AND SELF-SUFFERING

[Johannesburg,]

August 3, 1910

Sir,

Will you permit me to correct some statements made in your leading article on Lord Ampthill's action in the House of Lords on the passive resistance struggle?

You say that passive resistance commenced after the Government had offered to grant permits for priests, lawyers, doctors, etc., but when they refused to grant anything further. May I remind you that passive resistance commenced in 1907 when the question of priests, doctors and lawyers had not come up for public discussion, and when it did arise, it simply arose in order to forcibly illustrate the injustice that had been done by the Government in not conceding the demands of the community, which, as Mr. Patrick Duncan has pointed out, have never varied.<sup>1</sup> British Indians have always asked for equality in the eye of the law as to immigration but never for unrestricted immigration of Asiatics. I emphatically deny that British Indians who have been deported have in any large numbers declined to give information as to their domicile. As a matter of fact, the domicile of most of them was within the knowledge of the Asiatic department and no proof of domicile

was necessary in connection with those who had educational attainments, as many had. You state, again, that in no instances have cases of harsh treatment in the gaols of the Transvaal been proved by the passive resisters. May I inform you and the public that the question of diet, which was a very serious one, was very prominently brought before the Government and the public, and that it is only now that the grievance, I am thankful to say, has been partially remedied. That passive resisters who are not criminals in the ordinary sense of the term have been sent to a penal settlement, like Diepkloof, where the ordinary privileges of prisoners are withheld in my opinion is undoubtedly a glaring instance of harsh treatment.

You further state that British Indians are keeping up passive resistance for other than the purpose of having their legitimate demands granted. In reply, I can only say that the world has not many men who would suffer, without reasonable cause, privation, starvation, separation from those who may be near and dear to them, etc., besides the loss of their worldly possessions. I quite agree with you that, if the demands of the community are granted, they should be granted not in response to passive resistance, but because they are intrinsically just; but I hope you will agree that passive resistance ought not to stand in the way of a strong government doing justice. You seem to think that passive resistance means coercion. In my humble opinion, the self-suffering which the community has undergone, and which has been expressed by the term 'passive resistance', has been undertaken after the methods of petitioning, etc., had been exhausted, and in order to draw public attention to a grievance that was keenly felt and resented by the community.

I am, etc.,  
M. K. GANDHI

'Indian Passive Resisters'  
(Reply to *Rand Daily Mail*)  
*Rand Daily Mail*, 6 Aug. 1910  
*Indian Opinion*, 6 Aug. 1910

### 3. THE USE AND SCOPE OF TRUTH-FORCE

[Before 11 July 1914]<sup>1</sup>

I shall be at least far away from Phoenix, if not actually in the Motherland, when this Commemoration Issue is published. I would, however, leave behind me my innermost thoughts upon that which has made this special issue necessary. Without Passive Resistance, there would have been no richly illustrated and important special issue of *Indian Opinion*, which has, for the last eleven years, in an unpretentious and humble manner, endeavoured to serve my countrymen and South Africa, a period covering the most critical stage that they will, perhaps, ever have to pass through. It marks the rise and growth of Passive Resistance, which has attracted world-wide attention. The term does not fit the activity of the Indian community during the past eight years. Its equivalent in the vernacular,<sup>2</sup> rendered into English, means Truth-Force. I think Tolstoy called it also Soul-Force or Love-Force, and so it is. Carried out to its utmost limit, this force is independent of pecuniary or other material assistance; certainly, even in its elementary form, of physical force or violence. Indeed, violence is the negation of this great spiritual force, which can only be cultivated or wielded by those who will entirely eschew violence. It is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. It can be used alike by men, women, and children.

It is totally untrue to say that it is a force to be used only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence. This superstition arises from the incompleteness of the English expression. It is impossible for those who consider themselves to be weak to apply this force. Only those who realise that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be Passive Resisters. This force is to violence and, therefore, to all tyranny, all injustice, what light is to darkness. In politics, its use is based upon the immutable maxim that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be gov-

erned. We did not want to be governed by the Asiatic Act of 1907 of the Transvaal, and it had to go before this mighty force. Two courses were open to us - to use violence when we were called upon to submit to the Act, or to suffer the penalties prescribed under the Act, and thus to draw out and exhibit the force of the soul within us for a period long enough to appeal to the sympathetic chord in the governors or the law-makers. We have taken long to achieve what we set about striving for. That was because our Passive Resistance was not of the most complete type.

All Passive Resisters do not understand the full value of the force, nor have we men who always from conviction refrain from violence. The use of this force requires the adoption of poverty, in the sense that we must be indifferent whether we have the wherewithal to feed or clothe ourselves. During the past struggle, all Passive Resisters, if any at all, were not prepared to go that length. Some again were only Passive Resisters so-called. They came without any conviction, often with mixed motives, less often with impure motives. Some even, whilst engaged in the struggle, would gladly have resorted to violence but for most vigilant supervision. Thus it was that the struggle became prolonged; for the exercise of the purest soul-force, in its perfect form, brings about instantaneous relief. For this exercise, prolonged training of the individual soul is an absolute necessity, so that a perfect Passive Resister has to be almost, if not entirely, a perfect man. We cannot all suddenly become such men, but, if my proposition is correct - as I know it to be correct - the greater the spirit of Passive Resistance in us, the better men we will become. Its use, therefore, is, I think, indisputable, and it is a force which, if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotisms and the ever-growing militarism under which the nations of the West are groaning and are being almost crushed to death, and which fairly promises to overwhelm even the nations of the East.

If the past struggle has produced even a few Indians who would dedicate themselves to the task of becoming Passive Resisters as nearly perfect as possible, they would not only have served themselves in the truest sense of the term, they would also have served humanity at large. Thus viewed, Pas-

sive Resistance is the noblest and the best education. It should come, not after the ordinary education in letters of children. but it should precede it. It will not be denied that a child, before it begins to write its alphabet and to gain worldly knowledge, should know what the soul is, what truth is, what love is, what powers are latent in the soul. It should be an essential of real education that a child should learn that, in the struggle of life, it can easily conquer hate by love, untruth by truth, violence by self-suffering. It was because I felt the force of this truth, that, during the latter part of the struggle, I endeavoured, as much as I could, to train the children at Tolstoy Farm and then at Phoenix along these lines, and one of the reasons for my departure to India is still further to realise as I already do in part, my own imperfection as a Passive Resister, and then to try to perfect myself, for I believe that it is in India that the nearest approach to perfection is most possible.

'The Theory and Practice of Passive Resistance'  
*Indian Opinion, Golden Number, 1 Dec. 1914*

<sup>1</sup> *En route to India* Gandhi left Phoenix on 11 July 1914

<sup>2</sup> *Satyagraha*

#### 4. EFFICIACY OF SOUL-FORCE

Motihari,  
June 11, 1917

My dear Esther,

I am here for a day. I received your booklet<sup>1</sup> as I was going to the station. It put me in mind of some of the happiest hours I used to have years ago in South Africa. I read the booklet years ago when I found myself in the company of some very dear Christian friends. I have read it again today with better appreciation if one may write in this manner of a sacred work like this. For me truth and love are interchangeable terms. You may not know that the Gujarati for passive resistance is truth-force. I have variously defined it as truth-force, love-

force or soul-force. But truly there is nothing in words. What one has to do is to live a life of love in the midst of the hate we see everywhere. And we cannot do it without unconquerable faith in its efficacy. A great queen named Mirabai lived two or three hundred years ago. She forsook her husband and everything and lived a life of absolute love. Her husband at last became her devotee. We often sing in the Ashram some fine hymns composed by her. You shall hear and one of these days sing them when you come to the Ashram.

Thank you for the precious gift I need such thoughts as are contained in the work.

With love,

Yours,  
BAPU

P.S. I am going to follow Drummond's prescription to read the verses on Love<sup>2</sup> daily for three months.

Letter to Esther Faering  
*My Dear Child*, pp. 13 14

<sup>1</sup> Corinthians XIII

<sup>2</sup> *The Greatest Thing in the World* by Henry Drummond

## 5. PASSIVE RESISTANCE IN RELIGION AND POLITICS

[Before 16 September 1917]

Dear Satyanand Babu,

Mr. Polak had sent me your letter of inquiry about Passive Resistance. I have time only to give you the briefest reply to your questions. P.R., as conceived by me, is soul-force, and essentially a religious principle. Its scope, therefore, takes in every variety of wrong. It is a force as old as the world itself. Consider the conduct of Prahlad, Daniel, Jesus, Mirabai and others whose guiding principle in life has been religion. Indians in South Africa made use, more or less, of this force, and they were successful only to the extent that they used it to the exclusion of every other force.

From whom did the idea first originate, is your second

question. In view of the meaning I have given to the expression, no reply seems to be necessary. But it may be stated that so far as its use on the political platform is concerned, the idea may be said to have originated with me. I knew nothing of it, but Tolstoy drew my attention to it.

At the time of the controversy on the Education Bill passed by the House of Commons and the so-called Passive Resistance offered by Dr. Clifford and others, Mr. Winston Churchill said that P.R. was perfectly constitutional under the British Constitution. A similar pronouncement was made by Gen. Smuts, with regard to our Passive Resistance when demand was made by Senator Whiteside for my deportation side by side with that of the nine Englishmen who were deported in connection with the European Railway strike that had just then ended.

I am unable, offhand, to give any reference from a constitutional lawyer.

Your fifth question requires historical precedents. This is answered in Para 2.

Your sixth question, whether it comes within constitutional methods, needs no answer. I am sorry for the delay that has taken place in replying. I am in Ahmedabad up to the 16th September, then prepare to leave for Bihar.

Letter to Satyanand Bose  
SN 6385

## 6. NON-VIOLENT AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE

New Delhi

I see that you have grasped the fundamental difference between passive resistance and non-violent resistance. Resistance both forms are, but you have to pay a very heavy price when your resistance is passive, in the sense of the weakness of the resister. Europe mistook the bold and brave resistance full of wisdom by Jesus of Nazareth for passive resistance, as if it was

of the weak. As I read the New Testament for the first time, I detected no passivity, no weakness about Jesus as depicted in the four gospels and the meaning became clearer to me when I read Tolstoy's *Harmony of the Gospels* and his other kindred writings. Has not the West paid heavily in regarding Jesus as a Passive Resister? Christendom has been responsible for the wars which put to shame even those described in the Old Testament and other records, historical or semi-historical. I know that I speak under correction for I can but claim very superficial knowledge of history - modern or ancient.

Coming to my personal experience, whilst we undoubtedly got through passive resistance our political freedom, over which lovers of peace like you and your good husband of the West are enthusiastic, we are daily paying the heavy price for the unconscious mistake we made or better still, I made in mistaking passive resistance for non-violent resistance. Had I not made the mistake, we would have been spared the humiliating spectacle of weak brother killing his weak brother thoughtlessly and inhumanly

I am only hoping and praying and I want all the friends here and in other parts of the world to hope and pray with me that this blood-bath will soon end and out of that, perhaps, inevitable butchery will rise a new and robust India not warlike, basely imitating the West in all its hideousness, but a new India learning the best that the West has to give and becoming the hope not only of Asia and Africa, but the whole of the aching world.

I must confess that this is hoping against hope, for, we are today swearing by the military and all that naked physical force implies. Our statesmen have for over two generations declaimed against the heavy expenditure on armaments under the British regime, but now that freedom from political servitude has come, our military expenditure has increased and still threatens to increase and of this we are proud! There is not a voice raised against it in our legislative chambers. In spite, however, of the madness and the vain imitation of the tinsel of the West, the hope lingers in me and many others that India shall survive this death dance and occupy the moral height that should belong to her after the training, however



imperfect, in non-violence for an unbroken period of thirty-two years since 1915.

Letter to Madame Edmond Privat

# 7. PASSIVE RESISTANCE OF THE WEAK

New Delhi,

The following correspondence between a European friend and Gandhiji is published for general information:

The European friend writes:

After carefully studying Roy Walker's thrilling story of your admirable work (*Sword of Gold*) I was satisfied that, lifelong as your struggle for non-violence had been, your unlimited devotion had met with success, at least as far as India's leaders and masses were concerned, and the fact that Britain retired from India in apparent goodwill and friendship, seemed to bear out the hope that appreciation of non-violence was no longer restricted to your own country. The first breach into the thick walls of violence seemed made, and the prospects for humanity seemed to have grown more lucid than ever.

All the more depressing were your recent confessions, as reported in the last edition of *Pea Vets* by George Ll Davies. It grieves me to the heart to read that you had never experienced the dark despair that was today within you. And though it is certainly true that God does not demand success but truth and love from a man, it is a sad sight to behold mankind as deeply entangled by violence as not to yield to the vast extent of soul-force and self-sacrifice given by you and your few friends during a long life.

However, willingly admitting as I do that you are in a far better position to look into the heart of things than I am, I cannot believe that your heroic efforts should be lost upon mankind, that the good seed you have so untiringly sown in all your surroundings, by your words as well as by your example, should be wasted.

Be that as it may, I for one (and I am sure I speak the heart of untold millions) feel it my bounden duty to express my deepest gratitude to you for giving the whole of your life to what you felt to be the one way to salvation for mankind.

Gandhiji's reply runs thus:

I have not seen the report you refer to. In any case, whatever I have said does not refer in any way to the failure of *ahimsa*, but it refers to my failure to recognize, until it was too late, that what I had mistaken for *ahimsa* was not *ahimsa*, but passive resistance of the weak, which can never be called *ahimsa* even in the remotest sense. The internecine feud that is going on today in India is the direct outcome of the energy that was set free during the thirty years' action of the weak. Hence, the proper way to view the present outburst of violence throughout the world is to recognize that the technique of unconquerable non-violence of the strong has not been at all fully discovered as yet. Not an ounce of non-violent strength is ever wasted. I must not, therefore, flatter myself with the belief nor allow friends like you to entertain the belief that I have exhibited any heroic and demonstrable non-violence in myself. All I can claim is that I am sailing in that direction without a moment's stop. This confession should strengthen your belief in non-violence and spur you and friends like you to action along the path.

'*Ahimsa* Never Fails'

## § 2. *Satyagraha* and Its Scope

### 8. VICTORY IN THE SERVICE OF TRUTH

With an even mind face happiness and unhappiness, gain and loss, victory and defeat, and so join battle, thou son of Prithu; thou shalt incur no sin thereby.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Transvaal Indians, we believe, have emerged completely victorious. They struggled for 16 months. All the sections of the Indian community have become united. Indians all over South Africa were roused. Their pledge about gaol-going has been fulfilled. And the settlement followed with unexpected speed. It is a miracle that the prison doors opened before the term of imprisonment had expired. We shall not

come across many instances of this kind in world history. The Government has placed great confidence in the Indian community and an equally heavy measure of responsibility. The demand of the Indian community has been accepted, namely, that the law should not apply to them. The words, 'the law should not apply to them', need to be carefully understood. An oath was taken in September 1906 not to submit to the law. Submission to the law was the only issue at that time. The regulations made under it in July 1907 did not then exist. The Government has now promised not to apply the law to Indians on the condition that the objective of the law should be secured by the Indians themselves acting of their free will, that is, without the compulsion of that law. This condition means voluntary registration. The Indian community has time and again offered to register on its own. The Government has now at last accepted the proposal and agreed not to apply the new law to those who register voluntarily. This means that the law will remain valid only for the blacklegs; alternatively there may be another law applicable to all.

When the movement started, there were quite a few weak-minded Indians who argued, 'The laws of the State are inviolable'; 'It is like running one's head against a wall'; 'It will do if the Government makes a few changes in the law'; 'It is madness to resist the Government' and so on. Those who argued in this manner showed little faith in Khuda-Ishwar, swayed as they were by greed for money or other unworthy temptations. The selfsame law is now about to fall apart. It has not gone yet, but the Indians who were imprisoned have been released with the assurance that it will go. All the newspapers, without an exception, are astonished. The whites are dumbfounded and wonder how all this came about.

We consider this a victory for truth. We do not claim that every Indian adhered to truth in the course of the struggle. Nor do we claim that no one thought of his own interests during the campaign. We do, however, assert that this was a fight on behalf of truth, and that most of the leaders fought with scrupulous regard for truth. That is why there has been such a wonderful result. Truth is God, or God is nothing but Truth. We come across this idea in every religion. It is a divine law that he who serves that Truth that God will

never suffer defeat. Sometimes men of truth appear to have failed, but that is no more than a fleeting appearance. In reality they are not defeated. When the result is not as we wanted it to be, we tend to think we have failed. But that which appears a defeat to us is often but victory itself. There are thousands of such instances in history. If, with some measure of truth on our side, we strive for a certain result and fail, the blame does not lie with truth but with us. If a particular result does not serve our good, God will not grant it, however much we may desire it. That is why we quote above a verse from the *Gita*, which says that we must fight on, with an equal mind, through happiness and unhappiness, gain and loss. If we do so, we shall incur no sin. This is a time-honoured solution. With that key, we shall be able to open the most unyielding of locks. He who fights in this manner will fight only in the name of God. He will give no thought to success or failure. He is pledged only to the great task of serving Truth, doing his duty in the name of God. The outcome itself is in the hands of the Lord Almighty.

If this is a victory for truth, it is also a victory for *satyagraha*. Every Indian should by now be convinced that *satyagraha*, or passive resistance, is an infallible remedy. It can cure the most dangerous of ailments. Our success should lead at least to one result, namely, that we make full use of *satyagraha*. Only it should be used on proper occasions, and the people should remain united. It must also be realized that there are evils to which *satyagraha* cannot be applied. It can be effective only in situations where we are required to act positively. For instance, if the Government does not allow us to acquire land, *satyagraha* will be of no avail. If, however, it forbids us from walking along a certain foot-path, or asks us to shift to Locations, or seeks to prevent us from carrying on trade, we can resort to *satyagraha*. That is, if we are required to do anything which violates our religion or insults our manhood, we can administer the invaluable physic of *satyagraha*. There is one condition, however, to be observed, if the remedy is to be effective: we should be prepared collectively to accept hardships.

Some persons may well feel that all this is empty talk. What victory has there been to talk about? Here we are yielding on

the question of giving digit-impressions. I am afraid that those who argue like this do not know the true position. This was not a struggle against digit-impressions. Once the law is gone, there is no harm in our having to give the ten finger-prints. The giving of finger-prints is not in itself a disgraceful thing. But under the new law giving anything whatever is objectionable. There is no humiliation in polishing a friend's shoes as a gesture or of our free will. But polishing shoes out of fear, when ordered to do so, would amount to demeaning ourselves as menials. In other words, whether a particular thing is good or bad depends on the context. We know that there are many Indians who have mistakenly assumed that our campaign is against the giving of ten finger-prints. But such Indians should realize that there is no humiliation in giving ten finger-prints when not compelled by the law. Doing so certainly does not amount to a violation of our pledge. At the moment of writing it is not finally settled that the digit-impressions will be asked for. Every effort is being made to ensure that they will not be. But it is our duty to place the matter before the people in the proper perspective. Digit-impressions whether or not they are required should not lead to any difficulty. It is essential to present a correct idea of the object of this campaign.

'Triumph of Truth' (G.)  
*Indian Opinion*, 8 Feb. 1908

<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, II 38

## 9. SATYAGRAHA AND FEARLESSNESS

There appears to have been a good deal of misunderstanding following the Transvaal Indians' failure to comprehend the secret of *satyagraha*. It is therefore necessary to give a little more thought to *satyagraha* in the context of our victory against the obnoxious law. Those who know the real meaning of *satyagraha* should not have the slightest doubt as to what the victory means.

A *satyagrahi* enjoys a degree of freedom not possible for others, for he becomes a truly fearless person. Once his mind

is rid of fear, he will never agree to be another's slave. Having achieved this state of mind, he will never submit to any arbitrary action.

Such *satyagraha* can be, ought to be, practised not only against a Government but against society as well if need be. It can often happen that a society is as wrong as a government. It becomes one's duty then to use *satyagraha* against society. The late Mr. Thoreau, whose book we have already summarized, thought that his countrymen did wrong in carrying on slave-trade. He therefore ranged himself against his people. The great Luther defied his people single-handed and it is thanks to him that Germany enjoys freedom today. And there was Galileo who opposed society. The people were resolved to kill him. Undaunted, he told them that they could kill him if they wanted to, but that it was nevertheless true that the earth revolved round the sun. Today, we all know that the earth is round and that it rotates round its axis once every 24 hours. Columbus acted like a true *satyagrahi* when facing his sailors. Exhausted by the long voyage, they declared, 'We will never get to America. Let us turn back, else we will kill you.' Unperturbed, Columbus answered, 'I am not afraid of being killed, but I think we ought to go on for a few days more.' They did discover America, and Columbus won everlasting fame.

Such a wonderful remedy is this *satyagraha*. When we ask in fear what will happen if the Government does not repeal the Act, we only betray the deficiency of our *satyagraha* or talk as if we had been unmanned, having lost the weapon of *satyagraha*. But our *satyagraha* prompts us to become free and feel independent. We have therefore nothing to fear. 'All this is idle talk. Whatever you do, you cannot start the campaign again. Once has been quite enough.' There are persons who talk thus. If it is true that we cannot resume the struggle, it will have been in vain that we started it at all.

Let us justify this view of ours. It is a matter of common observation that what we have won can be retained only by the same means through which it was got. What is won by force can be retained by force alone. A tiger seizes its prey by force, and retains it through force. Those who are forcibly locked up in gaol are kept there by force. The territories

acquired by emperors by use of force are retained by force. In the same manner, what is gained by love can be retained only by love. The mother feels great love for the child in her womb and rears it with the same love afterwards. Its punishment while yet a child should not be interpreted as use of force. There are also instances where a mother has lost a child altogether because she stopped loving it for some reason. Similarly what we have gained by *satyagraha* can be retained only through *satyagraha*. When *satyagraha* is given up, we may be sure that the gains will also be lost. Moreover, it is unlikely that one will succeed in retaining through physical force what one gained by *satyagraha*. Suppose Indians wish to retain by force the fruits of victory won through *satyagraha*. Even a child can see that, if Indians resort to force, they can be crushed within the minute. Likewise, if we abandon *satyagraha* and go on as we did before, what we have gained may be lost.

These examples serve to show that *satyagraha* is really an attitude of mind. He who has attained to the *satyagrahic* state of mind will remain ever victorious, at all times and places and under all conditions irrespective of whether it is a government or a people that he opposes, whether they be strangers, friends or relatives.

It is only because we do not appreciate the marvel of *satyagraha* that we live in India as a poor and cowardly race, not only in our relations with the Government but in our personal relations as well. Certain customs which are palpably evil are kept alive in our country mainly because we lack in the spirit of *satyagraha*. Though well aware that certain customs are bad, we do very little to end them either because of fear, laziness or undue regard for others.

Before concluding, let me refer to the latest instance. When the whites held an anti-Indian meeting in Pretoria Town Hall, there were only four whites to speak in our favour. They were thus four against a thousand. But the four were brave enough to express their views in the face of a chorus of abuse from the crowd. In the event, their *satyagraha* considerably detracted from the importance of the meeting and turned it into a menagerie.

We urge every Indian to follow these ideas carefully. Those who do will learn the true nature of our success and find

themselves equal to the tasks which the Indian community has to face.

'Secret of *Satyagraha*' (G.)  
*Indian Opinion*, 22 Feb. 1908

#### 10. CHOOSING THE TERM SATYAGRAHA

In response to our offer of a prize for the best Gujarati equivalents for certain English words, we have received some entries, almost all of which, we are sorry to say, are useless. Only four persons took the trouble of sending in suggestions, and it would thus appear that our readers take little interest in the language used in *Indian Opinion* or in Gujarati. One of them says that 'passive resistance' can be rendered as *pratyupaya*. He explains the word as connoting the state of being passive to whatever happens and taking all possible remedial measures. The word and the explanation are both worthless. *Pratyupaya* means counter-measure. Opposing good to evil will then be *pratyupaya*, but so will be the use of force to solve a problem. Passive resistance means resistance of evil with inner force instead of physical force. The explanation offered betrays ignorance. A passive resister cannot remain passive to everything that happens. In other words, he will always pit his inner strength against everything evil. Another equivalent that has been received is *kashtadhin prativartan*.<sup>1</sup> Here the word *prati* is superfluous and suggestive of antipathy. It betrays an ignorance of language. *Kashtadhin vartan* has in it a suggestion of the significance of passive resistance. But it is a big word and does not convey the full meaning. The third term is *drudha pratipaksha*.<sup>2</sup> Like *pratyupaya*, this too cannot be used to convey the meaning we attach to passive resistance. The person who sent in that word has also sent us an equivalent for 'civil disobedience'. It appears to have been sent in without much thought. The word suggested is *satyanadar*. The meaning here is the contrary. It means 'disobedience to truth', that is, resistance to truth.<sup>3</sup>

Civil disobedience is disobedience to untruth, and it becomes 'civil' if it is 'truthful' in its manner. The word civil



also includes the meaning of passive. We have therefore only one word available to us for the present, and that is *satyagraha*. The person<sup>4</sup> who suggested this word would not like his name published, neither does he want the prize. Not that he means any slight to the prize, but being in a way connected with this paper, he does not want it awarded to himself.

We have made these comments with a purpose. Those who sent in suggestions for the competition ought to have given careful thought to the meanings of the words they coined. It was also necessary for them to understand the meaning of passive resistance. To suggest any word that comes into one's head is an insult to one's language; it is to invite ridicule upon oneself. Moreover, by thus acting thoughtlessly in this matter of finding an equivalent for passive resistance, we violate the very principle underlying the movement which we have called *satyagraha*. How can we put up with that? We hope that in future these three competitors, and our other readers as well, will take more pains in their ventures and win recognition both for themselves and for the tasks they undertake.

'Gujarati Equivalents for Passive Resistance, etc.' (G.)

*Indian Opinion*, 7 Mar. 1908

<sup>1</sup> *Pratvaratan* = resistance, *kashladhin pratvaratan* = resistance through submission to hardship

<sup>2</sup> *Dridha pratipaksha* = firmness in resistance

<sup>3</sup> The correspondent may have intended it to mean 'truthful disregard' of laws. Literally, however, it could mean 'disobedience to truth'

<sup>4</sup> This was Maganlal Gandhi, he had suggested *Sadagraha* as an equivalent for passive resistance, which Gandhi changed into *satyagraha*. See *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Ch. XII

## II. THE SATYAGRAHI AND TRUE STRENGTH

The *satyagraha* campaign in the Transvaal has lasted so long and has been so conducted that we have been able to see—learn—a great many things from it. Many have had personal experience of it. This much at least has been realized by everyone—that, in a struggle of this kind, there is no room for defeat. If, on any occasion, we fail, we shall discover that the

failure was due to some deficiency in the *satyagrahi* and did not argue the inefficacy of *satyagraha* as such. The point needs to be carefully grasped. No such rule can be applied to physical fighting. When two armies engage in such fighting, the defeat of either will not necessarily be the result of the inferior fighting quality of the troops. The combatants may have a high morale, and yet, insufficiency in other matters may lead to defeat. For instance, one side may have better arms than the other, or may be favourably placed in the battle-field, or may command superior technical skill. There are many such extraneous factors which account for the victory or defeat of the parties to a physical fight. But such factors offer no difficulties to those fighting the battle of *satyagraha*. Their deficiency alone can come in their way. Moreover, in the usual kind of fighting, all the members of the losing side should be deemed to have been defeated, and in fact they do think that way. In *satyagraha*, the victory of a single member may be taken to mean the victory of all, but the defeat of the side as a whole does not spell defeat for the person who has not himself yielded. For instance, in the Transvaal fight, even if a majority of Indians were to submit to the obnoxious Act, he who remains unyielding will be victorious indeed, for the fact remains that he has not yielded.

That being so, it is necessary to inquire as to who can offer so admirable a battle — one which admits of no defeat — which can have only one result. The inquiry will enable us to understand some of the results of the Transvaal campaign, and to decide how and by whom a campaign of this kind can be fought elsewhere or on some other occasion.

If we inquire into the meaning of *satyagraha*, we find that the first condition is that anyone who wants to engage in this kind of fighting should show a special regard for truth — should have the strength that flows from truthfulness. That is to say, such a man should depend on truth alone. One cannot have the best of both worlds. A man who attempts to have it so will be crushed under pressure of both kinds.<sup>1</sup> *Satyagraha* is not a carrot, to be played on as a pipe.<sup>2</sup> Anyone who thinks that it is, so that he may play on it if he can or bite it off if he cannot, will find himself lost in the end. It is absurd to suggest that *satyagraha* is being resorted to only by those who are

deficient in physical strength or who, finding physical strength unavailing, can think of no alternative but *satyagraha*. Those who hold such a view, it may be said, do not know what this fight means. *Satyagraha* is more potent than physical strength, which is as worthless as straw when compared with the former. Essentially, physical strength means that a man of such strength fights on the battle-field with little regard for his body, that is to say, he knows no fear. A *satyagrahi*, on his part, gives no thought whatever to his body. Fear cannot touch him at all. That is why he does not arm himself with any material weapons, but continues resistance till the end without fear of death. This means that the *satyagrahi* should have more courage than the man who relies on physical strength. Thus, the first thing necessary for a *satyagrahi* is pursuit of truth, faith in truth.

He must be indifferent to wealth. Wealth and truth have always been in conflict with each other, and will remain so till the end of time. We have found from many examples of Indians in the Transvaal that he who clings to wealth cannot be loyal to truth. This does not mean that a *satyagrahi* can have no wealth. He can, but he cannot make his wealth his God. Money is welcome if one can have it consistently with one's pursuit of truth; otherwise one must not hesitate even for a moment to sacrifice it as if it were no more than dirt on one's hand. No one who has not cultivated such an attitude can practise *satyagraha*. Moreover, in a land where one is obliged to offer *satyagraha* against the rulers, it is not likely that the *satyagrahi* will be able to own wealth. The power of a king may be unavailing against an individual. But it can touch his property, or play on his fear of losing it. The king bends the subjects to his will by threatening them with loss of property or physical harm. Therefore, under the rule of a tyrannical king, for the most part, it is only those who make themselves accomplices in his tyranny who can retain or amass wealth. Since a *satyagrahi* cannot allow himself to be an accomplice in tyranny, he must, in such circumstances, be content to think himself rich in his poverty. If he owns any wealth, he must hold it in some other country.

A *satyagrahi* is obliged to break away from family attachments. This is very difficult to do. But the practice of *satya-*

*graha*, if *satyagraha* is to be worthy of its name, is like walking on the edge of a sword. In the long run, even the breaking away from family attachments will prove beneficial to the family. For, the members of the family will come to feel the call for *satyagraha*, and those who have felt such a call will have no other desire left. When faced with suffering of any kind—loss of wealth or imprisonment—one need not be concerned about the future of one's family. He who has given us teeth will provide us with food to eat. If He provides for such dangerous creatures as the snake, the scorpion, the tiger and the wolf, He is not likely to be unmindful of mankind. It is not a pound of millets or a handful of corn that we hanker after, but the delights of the palate; not just the clothes that we need to enable us to bear cold, but garments of brocaded silk. If we abandon all this restless craving, there will hardly be any need for anxiety as to the means for maintaining one's family.

In this connection, it is worth while to bear in mind that many of these things have to be sacrificed even if physical force is resorted to. One is obliged to suffer hunger and thirst, to bear heat and cold, to sacrifice family bonds, to put up with pecuniary loss. The Boers went through all this when they resorted to physical force. The one great difference between the physical resistance that they offered and our resistance based on truth is that the game they played was in the nature of a gamble. Physical strength, moreover, has made them proud. Their partial success made them forgetful of their former condition. Having fought with deadly arms against a deadly enemy, they are bearing hard upon us as deadly tyrants. When a *satyagrahi* wins in battle, his success cannot but be beneficial to him and to others. A *satyagrahi*, if he is to remain loyal to truth, can never be a tyrant.

This inquiry, then, leads at last to the conclusion that he alone can offer *satyagraha* who has true faith in religion. 'The name of Rama on the lips, and a dagger under the arm'<sup>3</sup> that is no faith. It is no religion to speak in its name and to do exactly the opposite of what it teaches. But anyone who has true religion and faith in him can offer *satyagraha*. In other words, he who leaves everything to God can never know defeat in this world. Such men are not defeated in fact simply

because people say that they are defeated. So also one cannot claim success simply because people believe that one has succeeded. There can be no arguing about this; if you know the difference, you know it, else you don't.

This is the real nature of *satyagraha*. The Transvaal Indians have partially understood it. Having done so, they have been faithful to it in practice, again partially. Even so, we have been able to taste its priceless sweetness. He who has sacrificed everything for *satyagraha* has gained everything, for he lives in contentment. Contentment is happiness. Who has ever known any happiness other than this? Every other kind of happiness is but a mirage. The nearer we approach it, the farther it recedes.

We hope that every Indian will think of the matter this way and make himself a *satyagrahi*. If we learn the use of the weapon of *satyagraha*, we can employ it to overcome all hardships originating from injustice. It is not here in South Africa alone that the weapon is useful; it will be more so in our home-country. Only we must know its true nature, which is easy to do, and yet difficult. Men of great physical strength are rare. Rarer still must be those who derive their strength from truth.

'Who Can Offer *Satyagraha*?' (G.)

*Indian Opinion*, 29 May 1909

<sup>1</sup> Of physical strength and moral persuasion

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to a Gujarati saying, denoting a course of action that one expects to be profitable either way, whether one succeeds or fails

<sup>3</sup> A Hindi saying

## 12 READINESS FOR SATYAGRAHA

July 27, 1916

In brief, the significance of *satyagraha* consists in the quest for a principle of life. We did not say to anyone in so many words that our fight was in pursuance of this quest. If we had said so, the people there would only have laughed at us. We only made known the secondary aim of our movement, which was

that the Government there, thinking us lowly and mean, was making laws to oust us from the country, and that it was right for us to defy these laws and show that we were brave. Suppose the Government passes a law saying that coloured persons shall wear yellow caps; in fact, a law of this kind was made in Rome for the Jews. If the Government intended to treat us in a similar fashion and made a law that appeared to humiliate us, it was for us to make it clear to the Government that we would not obey such a law. If a child says to his father: 'Please put on your turban the wrong side up for me', the father understands that the child wants to have a laugh at his expense and at once obeys the command. But when someone else, with uncharitable motives, says the same thing, he clearly answers, 'Look, brother, so long as my head is on my shoulders, you cannot humiliate me in this manner. You conquer my head first and then make me wear my turban in any fashion you please.'

The Government there in a similar way, thinking the Indians lowly, wanted to treat them as slaves and as far as possible to prevent their coming into the country. And with this end in view, it began inventing ever new laws, such as putting names of Indians in a separate register, making them give finger-prints in the manner of thieves and bandits, forcing them to live in particular areas, forbidding their movement beyond a specified boundary, making rules for them to walk on particular foot-paths and board specified carriages in trains, treating their wives as concubines if they could not produce marriage certificates, levying from them an annual tax of forty-five rupees per capita, etc., etc. Often a disease manifests itself in the body in various forms. The disease in this case, as has been explained, was the evil purpose of the Government of South Africa, and all the rules and regulations mentioned above were the various forms that it took. We, therefore, had to prepare ourselves to fight against these.

There are two ways of countering injustice. One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetrates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process. All strong people in the world adopt this course. Everywhere wars are fought and millions of people are killed. The consequence is not the progress of a nation but its decline. Soldiers returning from

the front have become so bereft of reason that they indulge in various anti-social activities. One does not have to go far for examples. In the Boer War, when the British won a victory at Mafeking, the whole of England, and London in particular, went so mad with joy that for days on end everyone did nothing but dance night and day! They freely indulged in wickednesses and rowdyism and did not leave a single bar with a drop of liquor in it. *The Times* commenting, said that no words could describe the way those few days were spent, that all that could be said was that 'the English nation went amaflicking [a-Mafeking]'.<sup>1</sup> Pride makes a victorious nation bad-tempered. It falls into luxurious ways of living. Then for a time, it may be conceded, peace prevails. But after a short while, it comes more and more to be realized that the seeds of war have not been destroyed but have become a thousand times more nourished and mighty. No country has ever become, or will ever become, happy through victory in war. A nation does not rise that way, it only falls further. In fact, what comes to it is defeat, not victory. And if, perchance, either our act or our purpose was ill-conceived, it brings disaster to both belligerents.

But through the other method of combating injustice, we alone suffer the consequences of our mistakes, and the other side is wholly spared. This other method is *satyagraha*. One who resorts to it does not have to break another's head; he may merely have his own head broken. He has to be prepared to die himself suffering all the pain. In opposing the atrocious laws of the Government of South Africa, it was this method that we adopted. We made it clear to the said Government that we would never bow to its outrageous laws. No clapping is possible without two hands to do it, and no quarrel without two persons to make it. Similarly, no State is possible without two entities, the rulers and the ruled. You are our sovereign, our Government, only so long as we consider ourselves your subjects. When we are not subjects, you are not the sovereign either. So long as it is your endeavour to control us with justice and love, we will let you to do so. But if you wish to strike at us from behind, we cannot permit it. Whatever you do in other matters, you will have to ask our opinion about the laws that concern us. If you make laws to keep us sup-

pressed in a wrongful manner and without taking us into confidence, these laws will merely adorn the statute-books. We will never obey them. Award us for it what punishment you like, we will put up with it. Send us to prison and we will live there as in a paradise. Ask us to mount the scaffold and we will do so laughing. Shower what sufferings you like upon us, we will calmly endure all and not hurt a hair of your body. We will gladly die and will not so much as touch you. But so long as there is yet life in these our bones, we will never comply with your arbitrary laws.

It all began on a Sunday evening in Johannesburg when I sat on a hillock with another gentleman called Hemchandra. The memory of that day is so vivid that it might have been yesterday. At my side lay a *Government Gazette*. It contained the several clauses of the law concerning Indians. As I read it, I shook with rage. What did the Government take us for? Then and there I produced a translation of that portion of the *Gazette* which contained the said laws and wrote under it: 'I will never let these laws govern me' This was at once sent for publication to *Indian Opinion* at Phoenix. I did not dream at the time that even a single Indian would be capable of the unprecedented heroism the Indians revealed or that the *satyagraha* movement would gain the momentum it did.

Immediately, I made my view known to fellow-Indians and many of them declared their readiness for *satyagraha*. In the first conflict, people took part under the impression that our aim would be gained after only a few days of suffering. In the second conflict, there were only a very few people to begin with but later many more came along. Afterwards when, on the visit of Mr. Gokhale, the Government of South Africa pledged itself to a settlement, the fight ceased. Later, the Government treacherously refused to honour its pledge; on which a third *satyagraha* battle became necessary. Gokhale at that time asked me how many people I thought would take part in the *satyagraha*. I wrote saying they would be between 30 and 60. But I could not find even that number. Only 16 of us took up the challenge. We were firmly decided that so long as the Government did not repeal its atrocious laws or make some settlement, we would accept every penalty but would not submit. We had never hoped that we should find many



fellow-fighters. But the readiness of one person without self-interest to offer himself for the cause of truth and country always has its effect. Soon there were twenty thousand people in the movement. There was no room for them in the prisons, and the blood of India boiled. Many people say that if Lord Hardinge had not intervened, a compromise would have been impossible. But these people forget to ask themselves why it was that Lord Hardinge intervened. The sufferings of the Canadian Indians were far greater than those of the South African Indians. Why did he not use his good offices there? Where the spiritual might of thousands of men and women has been mustered, where innumerable men and women are eager to lay down their lives, what indeed is impossible? There was no other course open for Lord Hardinge than to offer mediation and he only showed his wisdom in adopting it.

What transpired later is well known to you: the Government of South Africa was compelled to come to terms with us. All of which goes to show that we can gain everything without hurting anybody and through soul-force or *satyagraha* alone. He who fights with arms has to depend on arms and on support from others. He has to turn from the straight path and seek tortuous tracks. The course that a *satyagrahi* adopts in his fight is straight and he need look to no one for help. He can, if necessary, fight by himself alone. In that case, it is true, the outcome will be somewhat delayed. If I had not found as many comrades in the South African fight as I did, all that would have happened is that you would not have seen me here in your midst today. Perhaps all my life would have had to be spent in the struggle there. But what of that? The gain that has been secured would only have been a little late in coming. For the battle of *satyagraha* one only needs to prepare oneself. We have to have strict self-control. If it is necessary for this preparation to live in forests and caves, we should do so.

The time that may be taken up in this preparation should not be considered wasted. Christ, before he went out to serve the world, spent forty days in the wilderness, preparing himself for his mission. Buddha too spent many years in such preparation. Had Christ and Buddha not undergone this preparation, they would not have been what they were. Similarly, if

we want to put this body in the service of truth and humanity, we must first raise our soul by developing virtues like celibacy, non-violence and truth. Then alone may we say that we are fit to render real service to the country.

In brief, the aim of the *satyagraha* struggle was to infuse manliness in cowards and to develop the really human virtues, and its field was the passive resistance against the Government of South Africa.

Speech on 'The Secret of *Satyagraha* in South Africa'  
Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad (H.)  
Ramchandra Varma, *Mahatma Gandhi*

<sup>1</sup> The London crowds behaved extravagantly on the relief of Mafeking 17 May 1900)

### 13. SOUL-FORCE AND *SATYAGRAHA*

[About 2 September 1917]

The force denoted by the term 'passive resistance' and translated into Hindi as *nishkriya pratirodha* is not very accurately described either by the original English phrase or by its Hindi rendering. Its correct description is '*satyagraha*'. *Satyagraha* was born in South Africa in 1908. There was no word in any Indian language denoting the power which our countrymen in South Africa invoked for the redress of their grievances. There was an English equivalent, namely, 'passive resistance', and we carried on with it. However, the need for a word to describe this unique power came to be increasingly felt, and it was decided to award a prize to anyone who could think of an appropriate term. A Gujarati-speaking gentleman submitted the word '*satyagraha*', and it was adjudged the best.

'Passive resistance' conveyed the idea of the Suffragette Movement in England. Burning of houses by these women was called 'passive resistance' and so also their fasting in prison. All such acts might very well be 'passive resistance' but they were not '*satyagraha*'. It is said of 'passive resistance' that it is the weapon of the weak, but the power which is the

subject of this article can be used only by the strong. This power is not 'passive' resistance; indeed it calls for intense activity. The movement in South Africa was not passive but active. The Indians of South Africa believed that Truth was their object, that Truth ever triumphs, and with this definiteness of purpose they persistently held on to Truth. They put up with all the suffering that this persistence implied. With the conviction that Truth is not to be renounced even unto death, they shed the fear of death. In the cause of Truth, the prison was a palace to them and its doors the gateway to freedom.

*Satyagraha* is not physical force. A *satyagrahi* does not inflict pain on the adversary; he does not seek his destruction. A *satyagrahi* never resorts to firearms. In the use of *satyagraha*, there is no ill-will whatever.

*Satyagraha* is pure soul-force. Truth is the very substance of the soul. That is why this force is called *satyagraha*. The soul is informed with knowledge. In it burns the flame of love. If someone gives us pain through ignorance, we shall win him through love. 'Non-violence is the supreme *dharma*'<sup>1</sup> is the proof of this power of love. Non-violence is a dormant state. In the waking state, it is love. Ruled by love, the world goes on. In English there is a saying, 'Might is Right'. Then there is the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. Both these ideas are contradictory to the above principle. Neither is wholly true. If ill-will were the chief motive-force, the world would have been destroyed long ago; and neither would I have had the opportunity to write this article nor would the hopes of the readers be fulfilled. We are alive solely because of love. We are all ourselves the proof of this. Deluded by modern western civilization, we have forgotten our ancient civilization and worship the might of arms.

We forget the principle of non-violence, which is the essence of all religions. The doctrine of arms stands for irreligion. It is due to the sway of that doctrine that a sanguinary war is raging in Europe.

In India also we find worship of arms. We see it even in that great work of Tulsidas. But it is seen in all the books that soul-force is the supreme power.

Rama stands for the soul and Ravan for the non-soul. The

immense physical might of Ravana is as nothing compared to the soul-force of Rama. Ravana's ten heads are as straw to Rama. Rama is a *yogi*, he has conquered self and pride. He is 'placid equally in affluence and adversity', he has 'neither attachment, nor greed nor the intoxication of status'. This represents the ultimate in *satyagraha*. The banner of *satyagraha* can again fly in the Indian sky and it is our duty to raise it. If we take recourse to *satyagraha*, we can conquer our conquerors the English, make them bow before our tremendous soul-force, and the issue will be of benefit to the whole world.

It is certain that India cannot rival Britain or Europe in force of arms. The British worship the war-god and they can all of them become, as they are becoming, bearers of arms. The hundreds of millions in India can never carry arms. They have made the religion of non-violence their own. It is impossible for the *varnashrama* system to disappear from India.

The way of *varnashrama* is a necessary law of nature. India, by making a judicious use of it, derives much benefit. Even the Muslims and the English in India observe this system to some extent. Outside of India, too, people follow it without being aware of it. So long as this institution of *varnashrama* exists in India, everyone cannot bear arms here. The highest place in India is assigned to the *brahmana dharma*— which is soul-force. Even the armed warrior does obeisance to the *Brahmin*. So long as this custom prevails, it is vain for us to aspire for equality with the West in force of arms.

It is our *Kamadhenu* <sup>2</sup> It brings good both to the *satyagrahi* and his adversary. It is ever victorious. For instance, Harishchandra was a *satyagrahi*, Prahlad was a *satyagrahi*, Mirabai was a *satyagrahi*. Daniel, Socrates and those Arabs who hurled themselves on the fire of the French artillery were all *satyagrahis*. We see from these examples that a *satyagrahi* does not fear for his body, he does not give up what he thinks is Truth; the word 'defeat' is not to be found in his dictionary, he does not wish for the destruction of his antagonist, he does not vent anger on him; but has only compassion for him.

A *satyagrahi* does not wait for others, but throws himself into the fray, relying entirely on his own resources. He trusts that when the time comes, others will do likewise. His practice is his precept. Like air, *satyagraha* is all-pervading. It is infectious,

which means that all people big and small, men and women—can become *satyagrahis*. No one is kept out from the army of *satyagrahis*. A *satyagrahi* cannot perpetrate tyranny on anyone; he is not subdued through application of physical force; he does not strike at anyone. Just as anyone can resort to *satyagraha*, it can be resorted to in almost any situation.

People demand historical evidence in support of *satyagraha*. History is for the most part a record of armed activities. Natural activities find very little mention in it. Only uncommon activities strike us with wonder. *Satyagraha* has been used always and in all situations. The father and the son, the man and the wife are perpetually resorting to *satyagraha*, one towards the other. When a father gets angry and punishes the son, the son does not hit back with a weapon, he conquers his father's anger by submitting to him. The son refuses to be subdued by the unjust rule of his father but he puts up with the punishment that he may incur through disobeying the unjust father. We can similarly free ourselves of the unjust rule of the Government by defying the unjust rule and accepting the punishments that go with it. We do not bear malice towards the Government. When we set its fears at rest, when we do not desire to make armed assaults on the administrators, nor to unseat them from power, but only to get rid of their injustice, they will at once be subdued to our will.

The question is asked why we should call any rule unjust. In saying so, we ourselves assume the function of a judge. It is true. But in this world, we always have to act as judges for ourselves. That is why the *satyagrahi* does not strike his adversary with arms. If he has Truth on his side, he will win, and if his thought is faulty, he will suffer the consequences of his fault.

What is the good, they ask, of only one person opposing injustice; for he will be punished and destroyed, he will languish in prison or meet an untimely end through hanging. The objection is not valid. History shows that all reforms have begun with one person. Fruit is hard to come by without *tapasya*. The suffering that has to be undergone in *satyagraha* is *tapasya* in its purest form. Only when the *tapasya* is capable of bearing fruit do we have the fruit. This establishes the fact that when there is insufficient *tapasya*, the fruit is delayed. The

*tapasya* of Jesus Christ, boundless though it was, was not sufficient for Europe's need. Europe has disapproved Christ. Through ignorance, it has disregarded Christ's pure way of life. Many Christs will have to offer themselves as sacrifice at the terrible altar of Europe, and only then will realization dawn on that continent. But Jesus will always be the first among these. He has been the sower of the seed and his will therefore be the credit for raising the harvest.

It is said that it is a very difficult, if not an altogether impossible, task to educate ignorant peasants in *satyagraha* and that it is full of perils, for it is a very arduous business to transform unlettered ignorant people from one condition into another. Both the arguments are just silly. The people of India are perfectly fit to receive the training of *satyagraha*. India has knowledge of *dharma*, and where there is knowledge of *dharma*, *satyagraha* is a very simple matter. The people of India have drunk of the nectar of devotion. This great people overflows with faith. It is no difficult matter to lead such a people on to the right path of *satyagraha*. Some have a fear that once people get involved in *satyagraha*, they may at a later stage take to arms. This fear is illusory. From the path of *satyagraha* [clinging to Truth], a transition to the path of *a-satyagraha* [clinging to untruth] is impossible. It is possible of course that some people who believe in armed activity may mislead the *satyagrahis* by infiltrating into their ranks and later making them take to arms. This is possible in all enterprises. But as compared to other activities, it is less likely to happen in *satyagraha*, for their motives soon get exposed and when the people are not ready to take up arms, it becomes almost impossible to lead them on to that terrible path. The might of arms is directly opposed to the might of *satyagraha*. Just as darkness does not abide in light, soulless armed activity cannot enter the sunlike radiance of soul-force. Many Pathans took part in *satyagraha* in South Africa abiding by all the rules of *satyagraha*.

Then it is said that much suffering is involved in being a *satyagrahi* and that the entire people will not be willing to put up with this suffering. The objection is not valid. People in general always follow in the footsteps of the noble. There is no doubt that it is difficult to produce a *satyagrahi* leader. Our experience is that a *satyagrahi* needs many more virtues like

self-control, fearlessness, etc., than are requisite for one who believes in armed action. The greatness of the man bearing arms does not lie in the superiority of the arms, nor does it lie in his physical prowess. It lies in his determination and fearlessness in face of death. General Gordon was a mighty warrior of the British Empire. In the statue that has been erected in his memory he has only a small baton in his hand. It goes to show that the strength of a warrior is not measured by reference to his weapons but by his firmness of mind. A *satyagrahi* needs millions of times more of such firmness than does a bearer of arms. The birth of such a man can bring about the salvation of India in no time. Not only India but the whole world awaits the advent of such a man. We may in the meanwhile prepare the ground as much as we can through *satyagraha*.

How can we make use of *satyagraha* in the present conditions? Why should we take to *satyagraha* in the fight for freedom? We are all guilty of killing manliness. So long as our learned Annie Besant is in detention, it is an insult to our manhood. How can we secure her release through *satyagraha*? It may be that the government has acted in good faith, that it has sufficient grounds for keeping her under detention. But, at any rate, the people are unhappy at her being deprived of her freedom. Annie Besant cannot be freed through armed action. No Indian will approve of such an action. We cannot secure her freedom by submitting petitions and the like. Much time has passed. We can all humbly inform the Government that if Mrs. Annie Besant is not released within the time limit prescribed by us, we will all be compelled to follow her path. It is possible that all of us do not like all her actions, but we find nothing in her actions which threatens the 'established Government' or the vested interests. Therefore we too by participating in her activities will ask for her lot, that is, we shall all court imprisonment. The members of our Legislative Assembly also can petition the Government and when the petition is not accepted, they can resign their membership. For *swaraj* also, *satyagraha* is the unfailing weapon. *Satyagraha* means that what we want is truth, that we deserve it and that we will work for it even unto death.

Nothing more need be said. Truth alone triumphs. There

is no *dharma* higher than Truth. Truth always wins. We pray to God that in this sacred land we may bring about the reign of *dharma* by following *satyagraha* and that this our country may become an example for all to follow.

‘*Satyagraha*--Not Passive Resistance’ (H.)  
Ramchandra Varma, *Mahatma Gandhi*

<sup>1</sup> *Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah*

<sup>2</sup> Mythical cow which yielded whatever one wished

#### 14. SATYAGRAHA AND POPULAR AWAKENING

[2 September 1917]

Bhaishri Shankarlal,

You want to know my ideas about *satyagraha*. Here they are in brief:

The English phrase ‘passive resistance’ does not suggest the power I wish to write about; ‘*satyagraha*’ is the right word. *Satyagraha* is soul-force, as opposed to armed strength. Since it is essentially an ethical weapon only men inclined to the ethical way of life can use it wisely. Prahlad, Mirabai, and others were *satyagrahis*. At the time of the Morocco fighting, the Arabs were under fire from French guns. The Arabs were fighting, as they believed, solely for their religion. Reckless of their lives, they advanced running towards the French guns with cries of ‘Ya Allah’.<sup>1</sup> Here, there was no scope at all for fighting back to kill. The French gunners refused to fire on these Arabs and, throwing up their caps, ran to embrace these brave Arabs with shouts of joy. This is an example of *satyagraha* and the success it can achieve. The Arabs were not *satyagrahis* by deliberate choice. They got ready to face death under pressure of a strong impulse, and had no love in their hearts.

A *satyagrahi* bears no ill-will, does not lay down his life in anger, but refuses rather to submit to his ‘enemy’ or oppressor because he has the strength himself to suffer. He should, therefore, have a courageous spirit and a forgiving and compassionate nature. Imam Hassan<sup>2</sup> and Hussain<sup>3</sup> were merely two



boys. They felt that an injustice had been done to them. When called upon to surrender, they refused. They knew at the time that this would mean death for them. If, however, they were to submit to injustice, they would disgrace their manhood and betray their religion. In these circumstances, they yielded to the embrace of death. The heads of these fine young men rolled on the battlefield. In my view, Islam did not attain its greatness by the power of the sword but entirely through the self-immolation of its fakirs. It is soldier-like to allow oneself to be cut down by a sword, not to use the sword on another. When he comes to realize that he is guilty of murder, the killer, if he has been in the wrong, will feel sorry forever afterwards. The victim, however, will have gained nothing but victory even if he had acted wrongly in courting death.

*Satyagraha* is the way of non-violence. It is, therefore justified, indeed it is the right course, at all times and all places. The power of arms is violence and condemned as such in all religions. Even those who advocate the use of arms put various limits on it. There are no limits on *satyagraha*, or rather, none except those placed by the *satyagrahi's* capacity for *tapaścharya*, for voluntary suffering.

Obviously, it is irrelevant to raise issues about the legality of such *satyagraha*. It is for the *satyagrahi* to decide. Observers may judge *satyagraha* after the event. The world's displeasure will not deter a *satyagrahi*. Whether or not *satyagraha* should be started is not decided by any mathematical rule. A man who believes that *satyagraha* may be started only after weighing the chances of defeat and victory and assuring oneself of the certainty of victory may be a shrewd enough politician or an intelligent man, but he is no *satyagrahi*. A *satyagrahi* acts spontaneously.

*Satyagraha* and arms have both been in use from time immemorial. We find them praised in the extant scriptures. They are the expressions, one of the *daivi sampad*<sup>4</sup> and the other of the *asuri sampad*.<sup>5</sup> We believe that in former times in India the *daivi sampad* was much the stronger of the two. Even today that is the ideal we cherish. Europe provides the most striking example of the predominance of the *asuri sampad*.

Both these forms of strength are preferable to weakness, to what we know by the rather plain but much apter word

'cowardice'. Without either, *swaraj* or genuine popular awakening is impossible. *Swaraj* achieved otherwise than through resort to one or the other will not be true *swaraj*. Such *swaraj* can have no effect on the people. Popular awakening cannot be brought about without strength, without manliness. Let the leaders say what they like and the Government strive its utmost, unless they and we, all of us, strengthen the forces of *satyagraha*, the methods of violence are bound automatically to gain ascendancy. They are like weeds which grow wild in any soil. The crop of *satyagraha* requires willingness to exert oneself or a venturesome spirit by way of manure. Just as, moreover, the seedlings are likely to be lost among the weeds if the latter are not plucked out, so also will weeds of violence keep growing unless we keep the land free of them by *tapascharya* and, with compassion, pluck out those which have already grown.

We can, with the help of *satyagraha*, win over those young men who have been driven to desperation and anger by what they think to be the tyranny of the Government and utilize their courage and their mettlesome spirit, their capacity for suffering, to strengthen the *dawn sampad* of *satyagraha*. It is therefore very much to be desired that *satyagraha* is propagated as quickly as can be. This is in the interest both of the rulers and the ruled. The *satyagrahi* desires to harass neither the Government nor anyone else. He takes no step without the fullest deliberation. He is never arrogant. Consequently, he will keep away from 'boycott' but be always firm in the vow of *swadeshi* as a matter of duty. He fears God alone, so that no other power can intimidate him. He will never, out of fear of punishment, leave a duty undone.

I need hardly say now that it is our duty to resort to *satyagraha* to secure the release of the learned Annie Bai<sup>6</sup> and her co-workers. Whether we approve of every or any action of hers is another question. I, for one, certainly do not approve of some of them; all the same, her incarceration by the Government is a great mistake and an act of injustice. I know, of course, that the Government does not think it a mistake. Maybe the people are wrong in desiring her release. The Government has acted according to its lights. What can the people do to express their outraged feelings? Petitions, etc., are good enough when one's suffering is bearable. When it is

unbearable, there is no remedy but *satyagraha*. Only when people find it unbearable will they, and only those who find it unbearable will, devote their all, body, mind and possessions, to securing the release of Annie Bai. This will be a powerful expression of popular feeling. It is my unshakeable faith that before so great a self-sacrifice even the power of an emperor will give way. People may certainly restrain their feelings in view of the forthcoming visit of Mr. Montagu.<sup>7</sup> That will be an expression of faith in his sense of justice. If she is not released, however, before his arrival, it will be our duty to resort to *satyagraha*. We do not want to provoke the Government or put difficulties in its way. By resorting to *satyagraha*, we reveal the intensity of our injured feelings and thereby serve the Government.

Letter to Shankarlal on 'Ideas About Satyagraha' (G)

Gujarat, 2 Sept. 1917

SN 6373

<sup>1</sup> Glory to God

<sup>2</sup> & <sup>3</sup> Sons of Ali by his wife Fatima daughter of the Prophet. They refused to acknowledge the authority of Yazid Caliph 680-3. Hussain revolted against him, but was defeated and killed at Karbala.

<sup>4</sup> & <sup>5</sup> Godlike equipment and demonic equipment. *Bhagavad Gita* XVI 3, 4)

<sup>6</sup> Annie Besant

<sup>7</sup> L. S. Montagu (1879-1921) Secretary of State for India (1917-22)

## 15. INSTRUCTIONS TO SATYAGRAHIS

Satvagraha Camp,  
Nadiad,

April 17, 1918

1. The volunteers must remember that, as this is a *satyagraha* campaign, they must abide by truth under all circumstances.
2. In *satyagraha*, there can be no room for rancour; which means that a *satyagrahi* should utter no harsh word about anyone, from a *ravania* to the Governor himself; if someone does so, it is the volunteer's duty to stop him.
3. Rudeness has no place in *satyagraha*. Perfect courtesy must be shown even to those who may look upon us as their enemies

and the villagers must be taught to do the same. Rudeness may harm our cause and the struggle may be unduly prolonged. The volunteers should give the most serious attention to this matter and think out in their minds as many examples as possible of the advantages accruing from courtesy and the disadvantages resulting from rudeness and explain them to the people.

4. The volunteers must remember that this is a holy war. We embarked upon it because, had we not, we would have failed in our *dharma*. And so all the rules which are essential for living a religious life must be observed here too.

5. We are opposing the intoxication of power, that is, the blind application of law, and not authority as such. The difference must never be lost sight of. It is, therefore, our duty to help the officers in their other work.

6. We are to apply here the same principle that we follow in a domestic quarrel. We should think of the Government and the people as constituting a large family and act accordingly.

7. We are not to boycott or treat with scorn those who hold different views from ours. It must be our resolve to win them over by courteous behaviour.

8. We must not try to be clever. We must always be frank and straightforward.

9. When they stay in villages, the volunteers should demand the fewest services from the village-folk. Wherever it is possible to reach a place on foot, they should avoid using a vehicle. We must insist on being served the simplest food. Restraining them from preparing dainties will add grace to the service we render.

10. As they move about in villages, the volunteers should observe the economic condition of the people and the deficiencies in their education and try, in their spare time, to make them good.

11. If they can, they should create opportunities when they may teach the village children.

12. If they notice any violation of the rules of good health, they should draw the villagers' attention to the fact.

13. If, at any place, they find people engaged in quarrelling among themselves, the volunteers should try to save them from their quarrels.

14. They should read out to the people, when the latter are free, books which promote *satyagraha*. They may read out stories of Prahlad, Harishchandra and others. The people should also be made familiar with instances of pure *satyagraha* to be found in the West and in Islamic literature.

15. At no time and under no circumstances is the use of arms permitted in *satyagraha*. It should never be forgotten that in this struggle the highest type of non-violence is to be maintained. *Satyagraha* means fighting oppression through voluntary suffering. There can be no question here of making anyone else suffer. *Satyagraha* is always successful; it can never meet with defeat: let every volunteer understand this himself and then explain it to the people.

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

'Instructions to Volunteers' (G)  
*Kheda Satyagraha*

#### 16. THE LAW OF SATYAGRAHA

[25 April 1919]

In the first leaflet, I hinted that I would consider the meaning of *satyagraha* in a later number of this series. I feel that the time has now arrived to examine the meaning of *satyagraha*. The word was newly coined some years ago, but the principle which it denotes is as ancient as time. This is the literal meaning of *satyagraha*—insistence on truth, and force derivable from such insistence. In the present movement, we are making use of *satyagraha* as a force: that is to say, in order to cure the evil in the shape of the Rowlatt legislation, we have been making use of the force generated by *satyagraha*, that is, insistence on truth. One of the axioms of religion is, there is no religion other than truth. Another is, religion is love. And as there can be only one religion, it follows that truth is love and love is truth. We shall find too, on further reflection, that conduct based on truth is impossible without love. Truth-force then is love-force. We cannot remedy evil by harbouring ill will against the evil-doer. This is not difficult of comprehension. It

is easy enough to understand. In thousands of our acts, the propelling power is truth or love. The relations between father and son, husband and wife, indeed our family relations are largely guided by truth or love. And we therefore consciously or unconsciously apply *satyagraha* in regulating these relations.

If we were to cast a retrospective glance over our past life, we would find that out of a thousand of our acts affecting our families, in nine hundred and ninety-nine we were dominated by truth, that in our deeds, it is not right to say we generally resort to untruth or ill will. It is only where a conflict of interests arises, then arise the progeny of untruth, viz., anger, ill will, etc., and then we see nothing but poison in our midst. A little hard thinking will show us that the standard that we apply to the regulation of domestic relations is the standard that should be applied to regulate the relations between rulers and the ruled, and between man and man. Those men and women who do not recognize the domestic tie are considered to be very like brutes or barbarous, even though they in form have the human body. They have never known the law of *satyagraha*. Those who recognize the domestic tie and its obligations have to a certain extent gone beyond that brute stage. But if challenged, they would say 'what do we care though the whole universe may perish so long as we guard the family interest?' The measure of their *satyagraha*, therefore, is less than that of a drop in the ocean.

When men and women have gone a stage further, they would extend the law of love, i.e., *satyagraha*, from the family to the village. A still further stage away from the brute life is reached when the law of *satyagraha* is applied to provincial life, and the people inhabiting a province regulate their relations by love rather than by hatred. And when as in Hindustan we recognize the law of *satyagraha* as a binding force even between province and province and the millions of Hindustan treat one another as brothers and sisters, we have advanced a stage further still from the brute nature.

In modern times, in no part of the earth have the people gone beyond the nation stage in the application of *satyagraha*. In reality, however, there need be no reason for the clashing of interest between nation and nation, thus arresting the operation of the great law. If we were not in the habit

generally of giving no thought to our daily conduct, if we did not accept local custom and habit as matters of course, as we accept the current coin, we would immediately perceive that to the extent that we bear ill will towards other nations or show disregard at all for life, to that extent we disregard the law of *satyagraha* or love, and to that extent we are still not free from the brute nature. But there is no religion apart from that which enables us entirely to rid ourselves of the brute nature. All religious sects and divisions, all churches and temples, are useful only so long as they serve as a means towards enabling us to recognize the universality of *satyagraha*. In India we have been trained from ages past in this teaching and hence it is that we are taught to consider the whole universe as one family. I do wish to submit as a matter of experience that it is not only possible to live the full national life, by rendering obedience to the law of *satyagraha*, but that the fullness of national life is impossible without *satyagraha*, i.e., without a life of true religion. That nation which wars against another has to an extent disregarded the great law of life. I shall never abandon the faith I have that India is capable of delivering this truth to the whole world, and I wish that all Indians, men and women, whether they are Hindus or Mahomedans, Parsis, Christians or Jews, will share with me this unquenchable faith.

M. K. GANDHI

'*Satyagraha*: Its Significance

*Satyagraha* Leaflet Series, No. 6

Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, New Delhi

(Courtesy. H. S. L. Polak)

## 17. SATYAGRAHI, RENUNCIATION, AND DISCIPLINE

Bombay

May 20, 1919

Your letter wandered from place to place and came to my hand only today. I think it is wrong of you to covet my signature. My physical condition being what it is, I cannot sign, nor dictate, all letters.

So long as India has not understood the true nature of *satyagraha*, the doubts you have raised are bound to occur and you will have to have patience.

*Satyagraha*, once started, ends only when it has achieved its aim. At times it does seem to have ended, but in fact it has not. When *satyagraha* is likely to be confused with *duragraha*,<sup>1</sup> suspending it will be a way of launching true *satyagraha*. It is such a subtle thing that only through experience and constant reflection do we come to understand a little of it. As I see things today, *satyagraha* in the form of disobedience to laws is likely to start in July. Circumstances may, however, arise even earlier in which it may be resumed.

Some of the forms of *satyagraha* may conceivably have to be suspended repeatedly. I think it is impossible, beyond a certain point, to explain to you what power there is in fasts and other religious practices; since you have been keeping fasts all these years I am sure you have been and you would not have thought of saying some of the things you have said if there had been any *satyagraha* in your fasts. If you could see no difference between the fasts you kept in the past and the one on Sunday for Horniman, I must say you have deceived yourselves. I am emphatically of the view that our struggle grows protracted in the measure that our *satyagraha* is deficient. Renunciation is no renunciation if the desire for the things renounced has not disappeared. Those of you who have sacrificed their jobs and all will have done so to no purpose if they think they have gained nothing as a result. He alone has truly given up his job who could not do otherwise. Those who gave up their jobs should have felt happy doing so, not unhappy, but I see that that is not how they felt. This is why you feel yourselves in the position of Trishanku.<sup>2</sup>

Who am I that I should provide an opportunity for *satyagraha*? A *satyagrahi* is ever his own master. You can discuss things with me. It is quite true that, when an organization offers *satyagraha*, individuals should submit themselves to its discipline. But, once a person has become a *satyagrahi*, he will always find opportunities for offering *satyagraha*. How can those who are full of doubts and fears be reckoned as *satyagrahis*? To be a *satyagrahi* is like walking on the blade of a sword.



If I have not succeeded, despite what I have said, in solving your doubts, I can only counsel patience. If you think that *satyagraha* only means courting imprisonment somehow, you can go to jail by breaking any law. If one can offer *satyagraha* in this way, every prisoner is a *satyagrahi*.

There can be *satyagraha* only in civilly disobeying a law, for sufficient reason, without violating a moral law. If I could show any such way to you, I would myself offer *satyagraha*.

MOHANDAS GANDHI

Letter to *Satyagrahis* of Surat (G.)  
*Mahadevbhaini Diary*, Vol. V

<sup>1</sup> Abuse of *satyagraha*

<sup>2</sup> A mythic character, who remained suspended between heaven and earth

# 18. SELF-SUFFERING AND THE SILENT MORAL REVOLUTION

Laburnum Road,  
 Bombay,  
 August 10, 1919

The Editor  
 The Times of India  
 Sir,

You will perhaps permit me to reply to 'Pennsylvanian's'<sup>1</sup> well-meant advice to me. I am aware that many Englishmen honestly hold the opinion 'Pennsylvanian' does, and I thank him for providing me with an opportunity for removing some of the misunderstanding that exists about *satyagraha*.

'Pennsylvanian' has commended to me the example of his illustrious countryman, Abraham Lincoln. I have endeavoured to the best of my ability to translate into my life one of his sayings, namely,

2

Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.<sup>2</sup>

'Pennsylvanian' rightly insists on a 'moral revolution'. Now, *satyagraha* is that and nothing else. Civil resistance is but a part, though a necessary part, of it. Its root meaning is 'insistence on truth at all cost'. Life-*satyagrahis* are under the pledge of absolute adherence to truth, non-violence, poverty and chastity. An institution is at present in existence at which practically the whole of the programme sketched by 'Pennsylvanian' is being carried out.<sup>3</sup> English and American friends have visited it. I invite 'Pennsylvanian' to visit it and report upon it to the public. He will find there that men and women belonging to all stations in life are living on terms of perfect equality, that the unlettered receive literary education in so far as the daily toil permits it, and that the lettered members do not hesitate to take up the pickaxe and the shovel. He will find there that, besides agriculture, the inmates are under the obligation to learn the art of spinning and weaving. By exploring the records of its past, he will discover that its members helped with medicine the people of the surrounding villages during the influenza epidemic, that they helped the famine committee to distribute grain among the poor, that they distributed again for the same agency several thousand rupees against manufacture by the needy weavers and thus added to the production in the country, that through their labour several women, who were but the other day earning nothing, are able, by spinning cotton during their leisure hours, to earn a few coppers daily. In short, he will find that some of the items in the comprehensive programme sketched by 'Pennsylvanian' are being worked there to the utmost extent of the capacity of the *satyagrahis*. This is the silent moral revolution going on in our midst. It suffers by advertisement and it is not without some hesitation that I have placed before the public the constructive work that is being done by life-*satyagrahis*.

Let me add further that the advent of *satyagraha* has, to my knowledge, weaned many an anarchist from his blood-thirsty doctrine. He has found that secret societies and methods of secret murder have brought nothing but a military and economic burden on this unhappy land, that it has tightened the coil of the Criminal Investigation Department, and that it has demoralized and wrecked the lives of hundreds of youths who

have been led astray by it. *Satyagraha* has presented the rising generation with a new hope, an open road and an infallible remedy for most ills of life. It has armed that generation with an indestructible and matchless force which anyone may wield with impunity. *Satyagraha* tells the youth of India, self-suffering is the only sure road to salvation economic, political, and spiritual.

For the most part, *satyagraha* is 'evil resistance' and 'civil assistance'. But sometimes it *has* to be 'civil resistance'. Here I must call to my assistance another illustrious countryman of 'Pennsylvanian', Henry Thoreau. He asks,

Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislators?

He answers,

I think that we should be men first and subjects afterwards. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law so much as for the right.<sup>4</sup>

I think that the position taken up by Thoreau is unassailable. The only question is that of the remedy to be applied for vindicating the rights of conscience. The remedy in vogue is that of inflicting violence on those who wish to wound your conscience. Thoreau in his immortal essay shows that civil disobedience, not violence, is the true remedy.

In civil disobedience, the resister suffers the consequences of disobedience. This was what Daniel did when he disobeyed the law of the Medes and Persians. That is what John Bunyan did and that is what the *rai-yats* have done in India from time immemorial. It is the law of our being. Violence is the law of the beast in us. Self-suffering, i.e., civil resistance, is the law of the man in us. It is rarely that the occasion for civil resistance arises in a well-ordered State. But when it does, it becomes a duty that cannot be shirked by one who counts his honour, i.e., conscience, above everything. Rowlatt Act is legislation that affects the conscience of thousands of us, and I respectfully suggest that an appeal should be addressed by Englishmen to the Government that they withdraw an Act that hurts the self-respect of the nation and that has roused

such unanimous opposition, rather than that I should be asked to refrain from civil resistance in respect of it.

I am, etc.,  
M. K. GANDHI

Letter to *The Times of India*

*The Times of India*, 22 Aug. 1919

*Young India*, 23 Aug. 1919

<sup>1</sup> In an open letter to *The Times of India*, Penn ylvanian had appealed to Gandhi to concentrate his efforts on the improvement of society by a ceaseless propaganda for social education and revenue reform

<sup>2</sup> The concluding words of Lincoln's address at Cooper Institute, New York City, on 27 February 1860

<sup>3</sup> The reference is obviously to the Satyagraha Ashram founded by Gandhi at Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, in 1919

<sup>4</sup> *Civil Disobedience*, 1849

## 19 SATYAGRAHA AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

[11 September 1919]

I notice so much misunderstanding still prevailing about *satyagraha*, both among ourselves and the British, that, though I have written and spoken at great length about it, I think it necessary to say something more even at the risk of repeating myself.

The word '*satyagraha*' was coined in South Africa to describe a certain mode of action. The great fight in which our brethren there were engaged was at first known, even in Gujarati, as 'passive resistance'. I once spoke about this struggle to a British audience; the English chairman on the occasion observed that the helpless Indians, without a vote and without arms, had no alternative to 'passive resistance'. The chairman was a friend of mine. He stated his view in all sincerity of heart, but I felt humiliated. I knew for a fact that the struggle carried on by the Indian people in South Africa was no expression of their weakness. The community there had deliberately chosen that particular form of struggle. When it was my turn to speak, I corrected my friend's idea and explained that a struggle such as was carried on by the South African

Indians could never be carried on by the weak and that I saw greater courage in that way of fighting than what the soldier needed.

When I was in England in connection with that very struggle, I saw that the suffragettes would set buildings on fire or assault officers with whips, and this sort of struggle, too, they described as passive resistance, and the public knew it by that name. In the struggle carried on in South Africa, there was no room at all for such assaults.

Hence I felt that there was a great danger in describing the struggle in South Africa as passive resistance. In South Africa itself, I could not think of an English word which could become current. At the meeting of Englishmen mentioned before, I used the expression 'soul-force' to describe our struggle; but I had not the courage to use it always to denote our struggle. Intelligent English friends also realized the inadequacy of the expression 'passive resistance', but they could not give me another expression. 'Civil resistance' describes the struggle perfectly. The phrase occurred to me by chance only a few days ago and I have been using it in English. 'Civil resistance' is wider in meaning than 'civil disobedience', though it suggests less than '*satyagraha*'.

Moreover, I saw in South Africa that our struggle had pure truth and justice in it and the force we employed was not brute force but soul-force. In however small a measure it may have been, it was yet soul-force. We do not find such force employed by animals. Besides, there is always some energy of the soul flowing through truth and so we started describing the struggle in South Africa as *satyagraha*.

Thus, there is no exaggeration in asserting that the term *satyagraha* had its origin in the idea of purity. We shall be able to understand now that *satyagraha* does not consist merely in a civil disobedience of law; often, it may consist in not committing such disobedience. When we feel it to be our duty to commit civil disobedience, when we feel that not to do so would be a blot on our manliness and a degradation of the soul, *satyagraha* can consist only in such disobedience. Such *satyagraha* may be employed not only against the Government but also against society; it can be employed as between husband and wife, father and son, friend and friend; in short, this

valuable weapon may be used for almost any reform in any sphere. It is a weapon which sanctifies both him who wields it and him against whom it is employed. Its rightful use can never have an untoward result. It is invariably attended with success. If people employ *duragraha* in the name of *satyagraha* and unpleasant consequences follow, the latter is certainly not to blame.

Such *satyagraha* is often resorted to in families, whether people know it or not; that is, if a son feels that his father has been unjust, he does not give in to the injustice but cheerfully bears the punishment the father may mete out to him and, in this way, he ultimately succeeds in winning over the father, even if he were a formidable one, and securing justice from him. But, slaves of inertia that we are, we hesitate to apply this law outside the domestic sphere. Hence it is that I have considered *satyagraha* in social and political matters a new experiment. The late Tolstoy was the first to draw my attention, in a letter of his to me, to its being such.

It is the belief of many that *satyagraha* can be used only in matters concerning religion. My wide experience proves just the contrary. By employing it in other spheres, we introduce religion into them and by doing so we succeed the sooner in fact and save ourselves from no end of hypocrisy.

It is my firm conviction, that some of the most imperceptible laws of economics are at work in *satyagraha*. In this sense I believe *satyagraha* to be a practical method. Maybe it will take some time before people accept it as such, since, being a new method in the sense indicated above, they may not understand it. Is it any wonder, besides, that, when we are working for the best results, the thing should take some time? When *satyagraha* has become an accepted method in India, political and social reforms, which at present take such a long time to bring about, will be effected in a much shorter period; the distance between the rulers and the ruled and their distrust of each other will disappear and in their place will grow love and trust. It will be the same, we may be sure, as between the different sections of society.

Only one thing is necessary to ensure that the method spreads widely among the people. I feel convinced that, if the leaders understand it in its purity and place it before the

people, the latter will respond readily. In order to understand it rightly, one must have faith in truth and non-violence. There is no need to define truth; of non-violence I do not demand any very exacting interpretation in this context. We should bear no ill will towards those from whom we wish to obtain justice; we should not seek our end by using violence against them or causing them any injury, but through courtesy, though remaining unshaken in our resolve; this is all I mean by non-violence here and only so much of it is necessary for bringing about reforms of this kind.

All our activities will take on a new form when the people have accepted *satyagraha*. We shall spare ourselves much fuss, all too many pompous speeches, petitions and resolutions and much scheming. Personally, the social, economic, and political progress of the nation, which I see in *satyagraha*. I can see in nothing else.

'*Satyagraha*' (G.)

*Sanj Vartman*, 11 Sept. 1919

*Nai ajwan*, 14 Sept. 1919

## 20. ESSENTIALS OF SATYAGRAHA

Lahore,  
January 25, 1920

Dear Mr. . . .<sup>1</sup>

I have drawn the distinction between passive resistance as understood and practised in the West and *satyagraha* before I had evolved the doctrine of the latter to its full logical and spiritual extent. I often used 'passive resistance' and '*satyagraha*' as synonymous terms: but as the doctrine of *satyagraha* developed, the expression 'passive resistance' ceases even to be synonymous, as passive resistance has admitted of violence as in the case of suffragettes and has been universally acknowledged to be a weapon of the weak. Moreover passive resistance does not necessarily involve complete adherence to truth under every circumstance. Therefore it is different from *satyagraha* in three essentials: *Satyagraha* is a weapon of the strong;

it admits of no violence under any circumstance whatever; and it ever insists upon truth. I think I have now made the distinction perfectly clear.

Yours sincerely,

To  
Madanpalli (P. O.)

A letter  
SN 7071

<sup>1</sup> The addressee's name is illegible

## 21. CONDUCT OF SATYAGRAHI PRISONERS

The argument advanced by some friends and put by me at the end of the last chapter deserves consideration if only because so many honestly believe in it and so many followed it out consistently in their conduct in 1921 and 1922, when thousands went to gaol.

In the first instance, even outside the gaols, embarrassment of the Government is not our goal. We are indifferent if the Government is embarrassed so long as our conduct is right. Our non-co-operation embarrasses the Government as nothing else can. But we non-co-operate as lawyers or Councilors because it is our duty. That is to say, we will not cease to non-co-operate if we discovered that our non-co-operation pleased the rulers. And we are so indifferent because we believe that, by non-co-operation, we must ultimately benefit ourselves. But there cannot be any such non-co-operation in the gaols. We do not enter them to serve a selfish end. We are taken there by the Government as criminals according to their estimation. Our business, therefore, is to disillusion them by acting in an exemplary (and by them expected) manner, just as our business outside is to disillusion them by avoiding, say, their law-courts, schools or Councils or titles and by showing that we are prepared to do without their doubtful benefits.

Whether all of us realize it or not the method of non-co-



operation is a process of touching the heart and appealing to reason, not one of frightening by rowdyism. Rowdyism has no place in a non-violent movement.

I have often likened *satyagrahi* prisoners to prisoners of war. Once caught by the enemy, prisoners of war act towards the enemy as friends. It will be considered dishonourable on the part of a soldier as a prisoner of war to deceive the enemy. It does not affect my argument that the Government does not regard *satyagrahi* prisoners as prisoners of war. If we act as such, we shall soon command respect. We must make the prisons a neutral institution in which we may, nay, must co-operate to a certain extent.

We would be highly inconsistent and hardly self-respecting if, on the one hand, we deliberately break prison rules and, in the same breath, complain of punishment and strictness. We may not, for instance, resist and complain of search and, at the same time, conceal prohibited things in our blankets or our clothes. There is nothing in *satyagraha* that I know whereby we may, under certain circumstances, tell untruths or practise other deception.

When we say that, if we make the lives of prison officials uncomfortable, the Government will be obliged to sue for peace, we either pay them a subtle compliment or regard them as simpletons. We pay a subtle compliment when we consider that, even though we may make prison officials' lives uncomfortable, the Government will look on in silence and hesitate to award us condign punishment so as utterly to break our spirit. That is to say, we regard the administrators to be so considerate and humane that they will not severely punish us even though we give them sufficient cause. As a matter of fact, they will not and do not hesitate to throw overboard all idea of decency and award not only authorized but even unauthorized punishments on given occasions.

But it is my deliberate conviction that, had we but acted with uniform honesty and dignity behaving *satyagrahis*, we should have disarmed all opposition on the part of the Government, and such strictly honourable behaviour on the part of so many prisoners would have at least shamed the Government into confessing their error in imprisoning so many honourable and innocent men. For, is it not their case

## 23. RULES FOR SATYAGRAHIS

*Satyagraha* literally means insistence on truth. This insistence arms the votary with matchless power. This power or force is connoted by the word *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha*, to be genuine, may be offered against parents, against one's wife or one's children, against rulers, against fellow-citizens, even against the whole world.

Such a universal force necessarily makes no distinction between kinsmen and strangers, young and old, man and woman, friend and foe. The force to be so applied can never be physical. There is in it no room for violence. The only force of universal application can, therefore, be that of *ahimsa* or love. In other words, it is soul-force.

Love does not burn others, it burns itself. Therefore, a *satyagrahi*, i.e., a civil resister, will joyfully suffer even unto death.

It follows, therefore, that a civil resister, whilst he will strain every nerve to compass the end of the existing rule, will do no intentional injury in thought, word or deed to the person of a single Englishman. This necessarily brief explanation of *satyagraha* will perhaps enable the reader to understand and appreciate the following rules:

## AS AN INDIVIDUAL

1. A *satyagrahi*, i.e., a civil resister, will harbour no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.
4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by authorities.
5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.
7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent,

and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of *ahimsa*.

8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.

9. In the course of the struggle if anyone insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.

#### AS A PRISONER

10. As a prisoner, a civil resister will behave courteously towards prison officials, and will observe all such discipline of the prison as is not contrary to self-respect; as for instance, whilst he will *salaam*<sup>1</sup> officials in the usual manner, he will not perform any humiliating gyrations and refuse to shout 'Victory to *Sarkar*'<sup>2</sup> or the like. He will take cleanly cooked and cleanly served food, which is not contrary to his religion, and will refuse to take food insultingly served or served in unclean vessels.

11. A civil resister will make no distinction between an ordinary prisoner and himself, will in no way regard himself as superior to the rest, nor will he ask for any conveniences that may not be necessary for keeping his body in good health and condition. He is entitled to ask for such conveniences as may be required for his physical or spiritual well-being.

12. A civil resister may not fast for want of conveniences whose deprivation does not involve any injury to one's self-respect.

#### AS A UNIT

13. A civil resister will joyfully obey all the orders issued by the leader of the corps, whether they please him or not.

14. He will carry out orders in the first instance even though they appear to him insulting, inimical or foolish, and then appeal to higher authority. He is free before joining to determine the fitness of the corps to satisfy him, but after he has joined it, it becomes a duty to submit to its discipline, irksome or otherwise. If the sum total of the energy of the corps appears to a member to be improper or immoral, he has

a right to sever his connection, but being within it, he has no right to commit a breach of its discipline.

15. No civil resister is to expect maintenance for his dependents. It would be an accident if any such provision is made. A civil resister entrusts his dependents to the care of God. Even in ordinary warfare wherein hundreds of thousands give themselves up to it, they are able to make no previous provision. How much more, then, should such be the case in *satyagraha*? It is the universal experience that in such times hardly anybody is left to starve.

#### IN COMMUNAL FIGHTS

16. No civil resister will intentionally become a cause of communal quarrels.

17. In the event of any such outbreak, he will not take sides, but he will assist only that party which is demonstrably in the right. Being a Hindu he will be generous towards Mussalmans and others, and will sacrifice himself in the attempt to save non-Hindus from a Hindu attack. And if the attack is from the other side, he will not participate in any retaliation but will give his life in protecting Hindus.

18. He will, to the best of his ability, avoid every occasion that may give rise to communal quarrels.

19. If there is a procession of *satyagrahis* they will do nothing that would wound the religious susceptibilities of any community, and they will not take part in any other processions that are likely to wound such susceptibilities.

## 24. UNADULTURATED SATYAGRAHA

Saharsa,  
April 2, 1934

This statement owes its inspiration to a personal chat with the inmates and associates of the Satyagraha Ashram who had just come out of prison and whom at Rajendrababu's instance I had sent to Bihar. More especially it is due to a revealing information I got in the course of conversation about a valued companion of long standing who was found reluctant to perform the full prison task and preferring his private studies to the allotted task. This was undoubtedly contrary to the rules of *satyagraha*. More than the imperfection of the friend, whom I love more than ever, it brought home to me my own imperfection. The friend said he had thought that I was aware of his weakness. I was blind. Blindness in a leader is unpardonable. I saw at once that I must for the time being remain the sole representative of civil resistance in action.

During the informal conference week at Poona in July last I had stated that while many individual civil resisters would be welcome, even one was sufficient to keep alive the message of *satyagraha*. Now after much searching of the heart I have arrived at the conclusion that in the present circumstances only one, and that myself and no other, should for the time being bear the responsibility of civil resistance if it is to succeed as a means of achieving *purna swaraj*.

I feel that the masses have not received the full message of *satyagraha* owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency when their use is taught through non-spiritual media. Spiritual messages are self-propagating. The reaction of the masses throughout the *Harijan* tour has been the latest forcible illustration of what I mean. The splendid response of the masses has been spontaneous. The workers themselves were amazed at the attention and the fervour of vast masses whom they had never reached.

*Satyagraha* is a purely spiritual weapon. It may be used for what may appear to be mundane ends and through men and women who do not understand its spirituality provided the director knows that the weapon is spiritual. Everyone cannot

use surgical instruments. Many may use them if there is an expert behind them directing their use. I claim to be a *satyagraha* expert in the making. I have need to be far more careful than the expert surgeon who is complete master of his science. I am still a humble searcher. The very nature of the science of *satyagraha* precludes the student from seeing more than the step immediately in front of him.

The introspection prompted by the conversation with the Ashram inmates has led me to the conclusion that I must advise all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance for *swaraj* as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my lifetime only under my direction unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence. I give this opinion as the author and initiator of *satyagraha*. Henceforth, therefore, all who have been impelled to civil resistance for *swaraj* under my advice directly given or indirectly inferred will please desist from civil resistance. I am quite convinced that this is the best course in the interests of India's fight for freedom.

I am in dead earnest about this greatest of weapons at the disposal of mankind. It is claimed for *satyagraha* that it is a complete substitute for violence or war. It is designed, therefore, to reach the hearts both of the so-called 'terrorists' and the rulers who seek to root out the 'terrorists' by emasculating a whole nation. But the indifferent civil resistance of many, grand as it has been in its results, has not touched the hearts of either the 'terrorists' or the rulers as a class. Unadulterated *satyagraha* must touch the hearts of both. To test the truth of the proposition, *satyagraha* needs to be confined to one qualified person at a time. The trial has never been made. It must be made now.

Let me caution the reader against mistaking *satyagraha* for mere civil resistance. It covers much more than civil resistance. It means relentless search for truth and the power that such a search gives to the searcher. The search can only be pursued by strictly non-violent means.

What are the civil resisters, thus freed, to do? If they are to be ready for the call whenever it comes, they must learn the art and the beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty. They

must engage themselves in nation-building activities, the spread of *khaddar* through personal hand-spinning and hand-weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts by irreproachable personal conduct towards one another in every walk of life, the banishing of untouchability in every shape or form in one's own person, the spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs by personal contact with individual addicts and generally by cultivating personal purity. These are services which provide maintenance on a poor man's scale. Those for whom the poor man's scale is not feasible should find a place in small unorganized industries of national importance which give a better wage. Let it be understood that civil resistance is for those who know and perform the duty of voluntary obedience to law and authority.

It is hardly necessary to say that in issuing this statement I am in no way usurping the function of the Congress. Mine is mere advice to those who look to me for guidance in matters of *satyagraha*.

## 25. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF SATYAGRAHA

An esteemed correspondent, who has for years been following, as a student, the non-violent action of the Congress and who ultimately joined the Congress, expresses certain doubts with lucid argument. Whilst the argument is helpful to me it is unnecessary to reproduce it here. He lays down three basic assumptions and argues that India is hardly able to satisfy these assumptions under all circumstances. We may, he says, scrape through with the English because they are lovers of liberty, are few in number, and their democratic instinct, more or less developed, restrains them from lengths to which autocrats will go.

If non-violence has all these limitations, it is not of much

value or it has as much value as any other remedy, including violence, may have. But I have presented it as a never-failing remedy against tyranny. Limitations it has, but they are all applicable to the user and therefore under his control.

The suggested basic assumptions are:

1. Complete unity of the people in their desire and demand for freedom;
2. Complete appreciation and assimilation of the doctrine in all its implications by the people as a whole, with consequent control over one's natural instincts for resort to violence either in revenge or as a measure of self-defence; and (this is the most important of all)
3. Implicit belief that the sight of suffering on the part of multitudes of people will melt the heart of the aggressor and induce him to desist from his course of violence.

For the application of the remedy of non-violence complete unity is not an indispensable condition. If it was, the remedy would possess no special virtue. For complete unity will bring freedom for the asking. Have I not said repeatedly in the columns of *Young India* and these columns that even a few true *satyagrahis* would suffice to bring us freedom? I have maintained that we would require a smaller army of *satyagrahis* than that of soldiers trained in modern warfare, and the cost will be insignificant compared to the fabulous sums devoted by nations to armaments.

Nor is the second assumption necessary. *Satyagraha* by the vast mass of mankind will be impossible if they had all to assimilate the doctrine in all its implications. I cannot claim to have assimilated all its implications nor do I claim even to know them all. A soldier of an army does not know the whole of the military science; so also does a *satyagrahi* not know the whole science of *satyagraha*. It is enough if he trusts his commander and honestly follows his instructions and is ready to suffer unto death without bearing malice against the so-called enemy.

The third assumption has to be satisfied. I should word it differently, but the result would be about the same.

My friend says there is no historical warrant for the third assumption. He cites Ashoka as a possible exception. For my



purpose, however, Ashoka's instance is unnecessary. I admit that there is no historical instance to my knowledge. Hence it is that I have been obliged to claim uniqueness for the experiment. I have argued from the analogy of what we do in families or even clans. Humankind is one big family. And if the love expressed is intense enough, it must apply to all mankind. If individuals have succeeded even with savages, why should not a group of individuals succeed with a group, say, of savages? If we can succeed with the English, surely it is merely an extension of faith to believe that we are likely to succeed with less cultured or less liberally-minded nations. I hold that if we succeed with the English with unadulterated non-violent effort, we must succeed with the others; which is the same thing as saying that if we achieve freedom with non-violence, we shall defend it also with the same weapon. If we have not achieved that faith, our non-violence is a mere expedient, it is alloy, not pure gold. In the first place we shall never achieve freedom with doubtful non-violence, and in the second, even if we do, we shall find ourselves wholly unprepared to defend the country against an aggressor. If we have doubt about the final efficacy of non-violence, it would be far better for the Congress to revise its policy and invite the nation to a training in arms. A mass organization like the Congress will be untrue to its charge if, not knowing its own mind, it misled the people into a false belief. It would be an act of cowardice. As I have said before, because we cease to pin our faith to non-violence, we do not necessarily become violent. We merely throw off the mask and be natural. It would be a perfectly dignified course to adopt. The lesson learnt during the past seventeen years will still not be thrown away.

Now I am in a position to state what, in my opinion, are basic assumptions underlying the doctrine of *satyagraha*:

1. There must be common honesty among *satyagrahis*.
2. They must render heart discipline to their commander. There should be no mental reservation.
3. They must be prepared to lose all, not merely their personal liberty, not merely their possessions, land, cash, etc., but also the liberty and possessions of their families, and they must be ready cheerfully to face bullets, bayonets, or even slow death by torture.

4. They must not be violent in thought, word or deed towards the 'enemy' or among themselves.

'What are Basic Assumptions?'

## 26. SUSPENSION AND RESUMPTION OF SATYAGRAHA

Segaon,

A *satyagrahi* will, like a general, always choose his own time and ground for fight. *Satyagraha* should be kept in reserve until all other means of advancing the cause are exhausted. Even in armed warfare, suspensions and withdrawals are the recognized tactics.

Suspension does not exclude facing imprisonment if in the course of legitimate, peaceful and constructive activities people are arrested. These will not constitute civil disobedience. Your decision to continue the suspension is a wise one. You have lost nothing by suspension. There is nothing to prevent you from resuming the *satyagraha* when the situation again demands it and there is ample cause to compel you to revive *satyagraha*.

Talk to Hyderabad State Congress Delegation<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Delegation had informed Gandhi of the State Congress decision to continue suspension of *satyagraha* for some time more.

## 27. TIMING AND COOLNESS IN SATYAGRAHA

Delhi,

*Satyagraha* does not begin and end with civil disobedience. Let us do a little more *tapascharya* which is the essence of *satyagraha*. Suspension thus conceived can never do harm to the move-

ment. The opponent will find that his battery is exhausted when we do not act up to his expectations, refuse to have any firework displays or put ourselves at his disposal for brutal assaults of his *goondas*.<sup>1</sup> We must meet all his provocative and repressive measures with a coolness and an exemplary self-restraint even at the risk of being charged with cowardice. If there is no cowardice in us, we are safe; ours will ultimately be reckoned an act of rare bravery.

Meanwhile we should watch how things shape themselves. I am thinking out new plans of conducting the movement in view of the terrorist methods that some States seem to have adopted. We have to develop that technique of rendering futile the employment of hired hooligans against peaceful citizens.

An able general always gives battle in his own time on the ground of his choice. He always retains the initiative in these respects and never allows it to pass into the hands of the enemy.

In a *satyagraha* campaign the mode of fight and the choice of tactics, e.g., whether to advance or retreat, offer civil resistance or organize non-violent strength through constructive work and purely selfless humanitarian service, are determined according to the exigencies of the situation. A *satyagrahi* must carry out whatever plan is laid out for him with a cool determination giving way to neither excitement nor depression.

For a *satyagrahi* there can be only one goal, viz., to lay down his life performing his duty whatever it may be. It is the highest he can attain. A cause that has such worthy *satyagrahi* soldiers at its back can never be defeated.

Discussion with Philipose about Travancore

## 28. RELIGIOUS SATYAGRAHA

March 16, 1939

Mixing up of motives is damaging in any species of *satyagraha*, but in religious *satyagraha* it is altogether inadmissible. It is fatal to use or allow religious *satyagraha* to be used as a cloak or a device for advancing an ulterior political or mundane objective.

As with regard to the goal so with the means, unadulterated purity is of the very essence in this species of *satyagraha*. The leader in such a movement must be a man of deeply spiritual life, preferably a *brahmachari* whether married or unmarried. He must be a believer in — as in fact everybody participating in such a movement must be — and practiser of the particular religious observance for which the movement is launched. The leader must be versed in the science of *satyagraha*. Truth and *ahimsa* should shine through his speech. All his actions must be transparent through and through. Diplomacy and intrigue can have no place in his armoury. Absolute belief in *ahimsa* and in God is an indispensable condition in such *satyagraha*.

In religious *satyagraha* there can be no room for aggressiveness, demonstrativeness, show. Those who take part in it must have equal respect and regard for the religious convictions and susceptibilities of those who profess a different faith from theirs. The slightest narrowness in their outlook is likely to be reflected magnified multifold in the opponent.

Religious *satyagraha* is, above all, a process of self-purification. It disdains mere numbers and external aids since these cannot add to the *satyagrahi*'s self-purification. Instead, it relies utterly on God who is the fountain-head of all strength. Religious *satyagraha*, therefore, best succeeds under the leadership of a true man of God who will compel reverence and love even of the opponent by the purity of his life, the utter selflessness of his mission and the breadth of his outlook.<sup>1</sup>

Discussion with Hyderabad Aryasamaj Leaders  
*Haryan*, 27 May 1939

<sup>1</sup> Pyarelal adds 'Miss Agatha Harrison, who came shortly afterwards, asked "Is it true, Gandhiji, that genuine *satyagraha* can never provoke reprisals?" "Yes", replied Gandhi. "Genuine *satyagraha* is a spiritual exercise. As such it can only evoke the best, not the worst, in man "'

## 29. SATYAGRAHA AND WORLD PEACE

Sevagram,

March 29, 1941

Deep inside me I have an ever growing faith that in the midst of this universal destruction due to bloodshed, I am carrying on an absolutely innocuous struggle which, however, is pregnant with great potentialities.

The movement, for the conduct of which I am responsible, may prove a vain effort, if I represent no one but myself; and if I remain true to my faith, I may be satisfied, but so far as world peace is concerned, the effort will prove inadequate in terms of the present. For producing the desired result during the lifetime of the present generation, it will be necessary to give an unmistakable demonstration that a substantial part of the nation is behind the effort. Much more has to happen before such a demonstration becomes possible. The present movement is a humble attempt in that direction.

Man can only make an honest attempt. In a *satyagraha* movement, the saying that God is the giver of the result is literally true. Therefore, it is faith that sustains me and it is faith that must sustain the other *satyagrahis*. We have only begun the battle. The real test, the real suffering, has yet to come. Let me repeat for the thousandth time that, in this long and arduous struggle, quality alone will count, never quantity. In this there is no room for hatred, certainly not for camouflage.

Despite my being the originator of this struggle, I venture to say that only through it can we hope for permanent world peace. Peace can never come through war.

‘The Only Way Towards World Peace’ (H.)

*The Hindu*, 6 May 1941

*Sarvodaya*, May 1941

## 30. SATYAGRAHA AND ARMED RESISTANCE

Poona,

March 6, 1946

A friend has gently posed the question as to what a *satyagrahi* should do to prevent looting by *goondas*. If he had understood the secret of *satyagraha*, he would not have put it.

To lay down one's life, even alone, for what one considers to be right, is the very core of *satyagraha*. More no man can do. If a man is armed with a sword, he might lop off a few heads but ultimately he must surrender to superior force or else die fighting. The sword of the *satyagrahi* is love and the unshakeable firmness that comes from it. He will regard as brothers the hundreds of *goondas* that confront him and instead of trying to kill them he will choose to die at their hands and thereby live.

This is straight and simple. But how can a solitary *satyagrahi* succeed in the midst of a huge population? Hundreds of hooligans were let loose on the city of Bombay for arson and loot. A solitary *satyagrahi* will be like a drop in the ocean. Thus argues the correspondent.

My reply is that a *satyagrahi* may never run away from danger, irrespective of whether he is alone or in the company of many. He will have fully performed his duty, if he dies fighting. The same holds good in armed warfare. It applies with greater force in *satyagraha*. Moreover the sacrifice of one will evoke the sacrifice of many and may possibly produce big results. There is always this possibility. But one must scrupulously avoid the temptation of a desire for results. Here I am indicating only a possibility. May no one regard results as a temptation.

I believe that every man and woman should learn the art of self-defence in this age. This is done through arms in the West. Every adult man is conscripted for army training for a definite period. The training for *satyagraha* is meant for all, irrespective of age or sex. The more important part of the training here is mental, not physical. There can be no compulsion in mental training. The surrounding atmosphere no doubt acts on the mind but that cannot justify compulsion.

It follows that shopkeepers, traders, mill-hands, labourers,

farmers, clerks, in short everyone ought to consider it his or her duty to get the necessary training in *satyagraha*.

*Satyagraha* is always superior to armed resistance. This can only be effectively proved by demonstration, not by argument. It is the weapon that adorns the strong. It can never adorn the weak. By weak is meant the weak in mind and spirit, not in body. That limitation is a quality to be prized and not a defect to be deplored.

One ought also to understand one of its other limitations. It can never be used to defend a wrong cause.

*Satyagraha* brigades can be organized in every village and in every block of buildings in the cities. Each brigade should be composed of those persons who are well-known to the organizers. In this respect *satyagraha* differs from armed defence. For the latter the State impresses the service of everybody. For a *satyagraha* brigade only those are eligible who believe in *ahimsa* and *satya*. Therefore an intimate knowledge of the persons enlisted is necessary for the organizers.

'*Satyagraha* in Face of Hooliganism' (G.)  
*Harijan*, 17 Mar. 1946

### 31. THE BATTLES OF SATYAGRAHA

New Delhi,  
June 12, 1947

I know that this is a transitional period and going through the pages of history we find that whenever there has been a revolution such inhuman things have happened. But I wanted to change history. For example, we fought the battles of *satyagraha* on the strength of *ahimsa* and truth for sixty years and achieved something which is beyond imagination. In the same way I want to put army men to good use and see how they can serve the country in a different way. But I want one thing and people want something different. What is to be done about that? Only His will truly prevails. It is no exaggeration if I say that science is being misused these days, that it is being

put to diabolical use. Nothing can stand up to it except *ahimsa*. I have no doubt about it.

Talk to Army Men (G.)  
*Bihar Pachhi Dilli*, p. 127

### 32. SATYAGRAHA AND SELFISHNESS

New Delhi,  
 October 3, 1947

Brothers and Sisters,

I find *satyagraha* being carried on in many places in the country. I really wonder if what people describe as *satyagraha* is *satyagraha* or *duragraha*. What is happening in the country is that people talk of one thing and act quite to the contrary. Today every employee, whether belonging to the Post Office or the Telegraph Office, or the Railways or to the Indian States, must examine wherever he is trying to offer *satyagraha*, whether it stands for truth or untruth. If it is for untruth, there is no need to offer it and if it is for truth it should surely be offered under all circumstances. Whatever is done with a selfish motive cannot be called *satyagraha*. That would be like insisting on untruth. I have explained quite a few conditions for *satyagraha*. I have said that two things are essential in *satyagraha*. One is that the point on which we insist should be truth and another that our insistence should be necessarily non-violent.

Those who are carrying on *satyagraha* today should act with due deliberation. If the basic thing is not truth and there is recourse to force in pressing for the demand, then it would be well to give it up. If the thing is poisonous, if it is *duragraha* and an untruth and if we go on demanding what we possibly cannot get, then let me tell you that we cannot remain non-violent in making such a demand. This cannot be non-violence, it is only violence. It is impossible that anyone should make an unjust demand and at the same time claim to be non-violent.

If I am in charge of the refugee camps I would tell the



people living in those camps that they must clean their places themselves. Should they only play cards and dice and gamble or simply remain idle? I know there is not enough food and water for them. But if for that reason they start refusing to do any work, they will fall a prey to vices. And then there are not just half a dozen persons in those camps. Thousands are living in those camps. No one can say when they will be able to return to their homes. We shall certainly provide food for them; but let them at least do some work to earn it. They can start by cleaning their camps and then offer to do other jobs like spinning, weaving, carpentry, smithery, tailoring, etc. There are plenty of things one can find to do in India. These people may have been millionaires yesterday; but today they have lost their millions. Such things happen often in the world. Then it becomes necessary to begin afresh and start working. If somebody comes and says that he was once a millionaire and cannot work, all our plans will be upset. We cannot then succeed. Very respectfully I would like to say that we cannot proceed that way.

Whatever work we carry on should be ideal from every point of view. It should be clean and there should be nothing shoddy. Let me tell you that our difficulties are likely to be solved to a great extent if people do their own work. And if we get absorbed in our work our anger will also subside. The desire for revenge in our hearts will also die out. Goodness lies in recognizing evil as evil and then meeting it with goodwill. Therein lies the good of the country. We will not inflict suffering on anyone but will try to make others happy by undergoing hardships ourselves. If we do this, we shall be acting not only for the good of India but of the world. Today the world is watching how India is conducting herself. Now is the real moment of our test. We have attained independence. What are we going to do now?

Speech at Prayer Meeting (H.)

*Prarthana Pravachan*, Vol I, pp. 374-6

## 33. FIRMNESS OF FAITH

Birla House,  
New Delhi,

October 22, 1947

QUESTION: If we do not follow the conditions necessary for observing *ahimsa* all our lives, how can we find the strength for it at times of crisis? You tell us that we must maintain peace but how can peace be maintained?

GANDHIJI: I have said that this *ahimsa* was half-baked. Maybe God had cast a veil over my eyes. Nevertheless, I am becoming increasingly certain that if we are to be happy, that is, if every man is to be happy and to see others happy, there is no other way. When one sees that one has made a mistake and sets about rectifying it without losing a single minute, one rises very high. But if one tries to hide the mistake, attempts in various ways to gloss over it, one degrades one's character and one betrays one's *dharma*. No sin could be greater than this.

Why do those who are pacifists not keep themselves away from the rest? They can shape their life anew separately. Then their position will become stronger. It will also test their faith. But they should not remain inactive. As for me, even if I should be left all alone I will cling to my principles. For this is the only non-violent way to battle with the terrible violence that confronts us. Maybe our countrymen will not agree. But that is no reason to believe that non-violence is ineffective. The reason may be my own imperfection. If the faith of the *satyagrahi* is firm as a mountain, the *satyagrahi* should be able to prove that his way alone is true.

Discussion with Christians (G.)

*Dhiman Gandhiji*, Vol. I, pp. 131-2

## 34. NOTHING TO HIDE

October 27, 1947

We need hide something only if there is the slightest falsehood in us. A *satyagrahi* has nothing to conceal in his heart because

he intends to serve everyone. What is there to hide then? I know he<sup>1</sup> is not in a position to do anything; but he will at least carry my message to Jinnah. And what will he gain by deceiving me? In thought, word and deed I love the Muslims, Parsis and Jews and all mankind as much as I love the Hindus.

Note to Manu Gandhi (G.)  
*Dilhuman Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 153

<sup>1</sup> H S Suhrawardy

### 35. LOYALTY AND SATYAGRAH

New Delhi,  
 November 28, 1947

A friend asked me the other day whether I shared the opinion often expressed that as between nationalism and religion, the former was superior to the latter. I said that the two were dissimilars and that there could be no comparison between dissimilars. Each was equal to the other in its own place. No man who values his religion as also his nationalism can barter away the one for the other. Both are equally dear to him. He renders unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's. And if Caesar, forgetting his limits, oversteps them, a man of God does not transfer his loyalty to another Caesar, but knows how to deal with the usurpation. A rehearsal of this difficulty gave rise to *satyagraha*.

Take a homely illustration. Suppose I have mother, wife and daughter. All the three must be equally dear to me in their own places. It is a vulgar error to think that a man is entitled to forsake his mother and his daughter for the sake of his wife. He dare not do the converse. And if any of the three oversteps her limits, the law of *satyagraha* comes to his assistance for the restoration of the equilibrium of the three forces.

'No Comparison Possible'  
*Haryana*, 7 Dec. 1947

### § 3. Civil Disobedience

#### 36. CONSCIENCE AND THE LAW

It would seem as if the action of both Houses of Parliament in passing the Bill to legalise the marriage with a deceased wife's sister will convert the clergy of the Established Church into passive resisters of sorts. The Archbishop of Canterbury today issued a message in which he requested the clergy not to celebrate marriages with a deceased wife's sister although such unions are now recognised as legal by the law of the land.

*The Daily Press*

We have no desire to enter into the controversy as to whether marriage with a deceased wife's sister is a reform in the right direction or not. We have quoted the above-mentioned cablegram in order to show that passive resistance is one of the most approved methods of securing redress in given circumstances, and that it is the only course law-abiding and peaceful men can adopt without doing violence to their conscience. Indeed, it would appear that it is a method they must adopt if they have a conscience, and it revolts against particular legislation. It may be retorted that, between the passive resistance offered by British Indians in the Transvaal and that advised by the Archbishop of Canterbury, there is no resemblance. We demur and claim that, if it is lawful for the Archbishop of Canterbury to disregard the deceased wife's sister relief legislation, it is much more so for British Indians to withhold submission to the Asiatic Registration Act. If there is no penalty provided by law to punish the clergy who may not recognize it, by refusing to perform a marriage ceremony, it should be doubly their duty to accept the law. But the Archbishop, in deliberately giving contrary advice, has brought into play a higher law, and that is the law dictated by conscience. Rightly or wrongly, His Grace believes that there is no warrant for such unions in the Bible and that, therefore, the Legislature has committed a breach of God's law, which it would be irreligious for the clergy to countenance. In other words, he has recognized what Thoreau has said, that we should be men before we are subjects, and that

there is no obligation imposed upon us by our conscience to give blind submission to any law, no matter what force or majority backs it.

Such is also the position of British Indians in the Transvaal. Law-abiding they are, and it will take away nothing from the certificate they have enjoyed so long by their now refusing to accept registration under the Asiatic Law, which their conscience rejects as degrading to their manhood and offensive to their religion. It is possible to carry the doctrine of passive resistance too far, but it is equally so with reference to the doctrine of obedience to law. We cannot give the dividing line in words more appropriate than those of Thoreau when, speaking of the American Government, he says:

If one were to tell me that this was a bad Government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make any ado about it, for I can do without them. All machines have friction, and possibly this does enough good to counterbalance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil to make a stir about it. But, when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are paramount, I say let us not have any such machine any longer.

In the Asiatic Registration Act, British Indians have not only a law which has some evil in it, that is to say, using Thoreau's words, a machine with friction in it, but it is evil legalized, or it represents friction with machinery provided for it. Resistance to such an evil is a divine duty which no human being can with impunity disregard, and, as in the case of the Archbishop of Canterbury, so in that of British Indians, it is their conscience that must decide, as it has already decided, whether to submit to the Asiatic Act or not, cost what it may.

## 37. SUBMISSION TO THE PENALTY OF DISOBEDIENCE

[Motihari,]

April 18, 1917

Mr. Gandhi appeared before the District Magistrate on Wednesday, the 18th instant. He read the statement printed below, and being asked to plead and finding that the case was likely to be unnecessarily prolonged, pleaded guilty. The Magistrate would not award the penalty but postponed judgement till 3 p.m. Meanwhile he was asked to see the Superintendent and then the District Magistrate. The result was that he agreed not to go out to the villages, pending instructions from the Government as to their view of his mission. The case was then postponed up to Saturday, April 21.

With the permission of the Court, I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. In my humble opinion, it is a question of difference of opinion between the local administration and myself. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the *ryots*, who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the administration and the planters. I have no other motive and I cannot believe that my coming here can in any way disturb the public peace or cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The administration, however, have thought differently. I fully appreciate their difficulty, and I admit too, that they can only proceed upon information they receive. As a law-abiding citizen, my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I could not, therefore, voluntarily retire. Amid this conflict of duty, I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the administration.

I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding in the

public life of India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting examples. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience. I have ventured to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience of the higher law of our being — the voice of conscience.

Statement Before the Court'

*The Leader*, 22 Apr. 1917

### 38. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND MASS SATYAGRAHA

Bombay,  
April 18, 1919

It is not without sorrow that I feel compelled to advise the temporary suspension of civil disobedience. I give this advice not because I have less faith now in its efficacy, but because I have, if possible, greater faith than before. It is my perception of the law of *satyagraha* which impels me to suggest the suspension. I am sorry, when I embarked upon a mass movement, I underrated the forces of evil and I must now pause and consider how best to meet the situation. But whilst doing so, I wish to say that from a careful examination of the tragedy at Ahmedabad and Viramgam, I am convinced that *satyagraha* had nothing to do with the violence of the mob and that many swarmed round the banner of mischief raised by the mob, largely because of their affection for Anasuyabai and myself. Had the Government in an unwise manner not prevented me from entering Delhi and so compelled me to disobey their order, I feel certain that Ahmedabad and Viramgam would have remained free from the horrors of the past week. In other words, *satyagraha* has neither been the cause nor the occasion of the upheaval. If anything, the presence of *satyagraha* has

acted as a check even so slight upon the previously existing lawless elements. As regards events in the Punjab, it is admitted that they are unconnected with the *satyagraha* movement.

In the course of the *satyagraha* struggle in South Africa, several thousands of indentured Indians had struck work. This was a *satyagraha* strike and therefore entirely peaceful and voluntary. Whilst the strike was going on, a strike of European miners, railway employees, etc., was declared. Overtures were made to me to make common cause with the European strikers. As a *satyagrahi*, I did not require a moment's consideration to decline to do so. I went further and for fear of our strike being classed with the strike of Europeans in which methods of violence and use of arms found a prominent place, ours was suspended and *satyagraha* from that moment came to be recognized by the Europeans of South Africa as an honourable and honest movement in the words of General Smuts, a constitutional movement. I can do no less at the present critical moment. I would be untrue to *satyagraha*, if I allowed it by any action of mine to be used as an occasion for feeding violence for embittering relations between the English and the Indians. Our *satyagraha* must therefore now consist in ceaselessly helping the authorities in all the ways available to us as *satyagrahis* to restore order and to curb lawlessness. We can turn the tragedies going on before us to good account if we could but succeed in gaining the adherence of the masses to the fundamental principles of *satyagraha*.

*Satyagraha* is like a banyan tree with innumerable branches. Civil disobedience is one such branch, *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) together make the parent trunk from which all innumerable branches shoot out. We have found by bitter experience that whilst in an atmosphere of lawlessness, civil disobedience found ready acceptance. *Satya* and *ahimsa*, from which alone civil disobedience can worthily spring, have commanded little or no respect. Ours then is a Herculean task, but we may not shirk it. We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of *satya* and *ahimsa* and then, and not till then, shall we be able to undertake mass *satyagraha*.

My attitude towards the Rowlatt legislation remains unchanged. Indeed, I do feel that the Rowlatt legislation is one of the many causes of the present unrest. But in a surcharged



atmosphere, I must refrain from examining these causes. The main and only purpose of this letter is to advise all *satyagrahis* to temporarily suspend civil disobedience, to give Government effective co-operation in restoring order and by preaching and practice to gain adherence to the fundamental principles mentioned above.

Press Statement on Suspension of Civil Disobedience  
*The Hindu*, 21 Apr. 1919

### 39. MASS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Civil disobedience was on the lips of every one of the members of the All-India Congress Committee. Not having really ever tried it, everyone appeared to be enamoured of it from a mistaken belief in it as a sovereign remedy for our present-day ills. I feel sure that it can be made such if we can produce the necessary atmosphere for it. For individuals there always is that atmosphere except when their civil disobedience is certain to lead to bloodshed. I discovered this exception during the *satyagraha* days. But even so, a call may come which one dare not neglect, cost what it may. I can clearly see the time coming to me when I *must* refuse obedience to every single State-made law, even though there may be a certainty of bloodshed. When neglect of the call means a denial of God, civil disobedience becomes a peremptory duty.

Mass civil disobedience stands on a different footing. It can only be tried in a calm atmosphere. It must be the calmness of strength not weakness, of knowledge not ignorance. Individual civil disobedience may be and often is vicarious. Mass civil disobedience may be and often is selfish in the sense that individuals expect personal gain from their disobedience. Thus, in South Africa, Kallenbach and Polak offered vicarious civil disobedience. They had nothing to gain. Thousands offered it because they expected personal gain also in the shape, say, of the removal of the annual poll-tax levied upon ex-indentured men and their wives and grown-up children. It is

sufficient in mass civil disobedience if the resisters understand the working of the doctrine.

It was in a practically uninhabited tract of country that I was arrested in South Africa when I was marching into a prohibited area with over two to three thousand men and some women.<sup>1</sup> The company included several Pathans and others who were able-bodied men. It was the greatest testimony of merit the Government of South Africa gave to the movement. They knew that we were as harmless as we were determined. It was easy enough for that body of men to cut to pieces those who arrested me. It would have not only been a most cowardly thing to do, but it would have been a treacherous breach of their own pledge, and it would have meant ruin to the struggle of freedom and the forcible deportation of every Indian from South Africa. But the men were no rabble. They were disciplined soldiers and all the better for being unarmed. Though I was torn from them, they did not disperse, nor did they turn back. They marched on to their destination till they were, every one of them, arrested and imprisoned. So far as I am aware, this was an instance of discipline and non-violence for which there is no parallel in history. Without such restraint I see no hope of successful mass civil disobedience here.

We must dismiss the idea of overawing the Government by huge demonstrations every time someone is arrested. On the contrary we must treat arrest as the normal condition of the life of a non-co-operator. For we must seek arrest and imprisonment, as a soldier who goes to battle seeks death. We expect to bear down the opposition of the Government by courting and not by avoiding imprisonment, even though it be by showing our supposed readiness to be arrested and imprisoned *en masse*. Civil disobedience then emphatically means our desire to surrender to a single unarmed policeman. Our triumph consists in thousands being led to the prisons like lambs to the slaughter-house. If the lambs of the world had been willingly led, they would have long ago saved themselves from the butcher's knife. Our triumph consists again in being imprisoned for no wrong whatsoever. The greater our innocence, the greater our strength and the swifter our victory.

As it is, this Government is cowardly, we are afraid of imprisonment. The Government takes advantage of our fear

of jails. If only our men and women welcome jails as health resorts, we will cease to worry about the dear ones put in jails which our countrymen in South Africa used to nickname His Majesty's Hotels.

We have too long been mentally disobedient to the laws of the State and have too often surreptitiously evaded them to be fit all of a sudden for civil disobedience. Disobedience to be civil has to be open and non-violent.

Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion — a refusal to obey every single State-made law. It is certainly more dangerous than an armed rebellion. For it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardships. It is based upon an implicit belief in the absolute efficiency of innocent suffering. By noiselessly going to prison a civil resister ensures a calm atmosphere. The wrongdoer wearies of wrong-doing in the absence of resistance. All pleasure is lost when the victim betrays no resistance. A full grasp of the conditions of successful civil resistance is necessary at least on the part of the representatives of the people before we can launch out on an enterprise of such magnitude. The quickest remedies are always fraught with the greatest danger and require the utmost skill in handling them. It is my firm conviction that, if we bring about a successful boycott of foreign cloth, we shall have produced an atmosphere that would enable us to inaugurate civil disobedience on a scale that no Government can resist. I would therefore urge patience and determined concentration on *swadishi* upon those who are impatient to embark on mass civil disobedience.

‘Civil Disobedience’

*Young India*, 4 Aug 1921

<sup>1</sup> Gandhi was arrested near Palmford on 6 November 1913, while leading men, women, and children into the Transvaal on their ‘Great March’

#### 40. AUTHORITY, FREEDOM, AND RESPONSIBILITY

The next few weeks should see civil disobedience in full working order in some part of India. With illustrations of partial

and individual civil disobedience the country has become familiar. Complete civil disobedience is rebellion without the element of violence in it. An out and out civil resister simply ignores the authority of the state. He becomes an outlaw claiming to disregard every unmoral state law. Thus, for instance, he may refuse to pay taxes, he may refuse to recognize the authority of the state in his daily intercourse. He may refuse to obey the law of trespass and claim to enter military barracks in order to speak to the soldiers, he may refuse to submit to limitations upon the manner of picketing and may picket within the prescribed area. In doing all this he never uses force and never resists force when it is used against him. In fact, he invites imprisonment and other uses of force against himself. This he does because and when he finds the bodily freedom he seemingly enjoys to be an intolerable burden. He argues to himself that a state allows personal freedom only in so far as the citizen submits to its regulations.

Submission to the state law is the price a citizen pays for his personal liberty. Submission, therefore, to a state wholly or largely unjust is an immoral barter for liberty. A citizen who thus realizes the evil nature of a state is not satisfied to live on its sufferance, and therefore appears to the others who do not share his belief to be a nuisance to society whilst he is endeavouring to compel the state without committing a moral breach to arrest him. Thus considered, civil resistance is a most powerful expression of a soul's anguish and an eloquent protest against the continuance of an evil state. Is not this the history of all reform? Have not reformers, much to the disgust of their fellows, discarded even innocent symbols associated with an evil practice?

When a body of men disown the state under which they have hitherto lived, they nearly establish their own government. I say nearly, for they do not go to the point of using force when they are resisted by the state. Their 'business' as of the individual is to be locked up or shot by the state, unless it recognizes their separate existence, in other words bows to their will. Thus three thousand Indians in South Africa after due notice to the Government of the Transvaal crossed the Transvaal border in 1914 in defiance of the Transvaal immigration law and compelled the Government to arrest them.

When it failed to provoke them to violence or to coerce them into submission, it yielded to their demand. A body of civil resisters is, therefore, like an army subject to all the discipline of a soldier, only harder because of want of excitement of an ordinary soldier's life. And as a civil resistance army is or ought to be free from passion because free from the spirit of retaliation, it requires the fewest number of soldiers. Indeed one PERFECT civil resister is enough to win the battle of Right against Wrong.

Though, therefore, the All-India Congress Committee has authorized civil disobedience by Provincial Congress Committees on their own responsibility, I hope they will put due emphasis on the word 'responsibility' and not start civil disobedience with a light heart. Every condition must be given its full effect. The mention of Hindu Muslim unity, non-violence, *swadeshi* and removal of untouchability means that they have not yet become an integral part of our national life. If an individual or a mass have still misgivings about Hindu Muslim unity, if they have still any doubt about the necessity of non-violence for the attainment of our triple goal, if they have not yet enforced *swadeshi* in its completeness, if the Hindus among that mass have still the poison of untouchability in them, that mass or that individual are not ready for civil disobedience. Indeed it would be best to watch and wait whilst the experiment is being carried on in one area. Reverting to the analogy of the army, those divisions that watch and wait are just as much co-operating actively as the division that is actually fighting.

The only time, whilst the experiment is going on, that individual civil disobedience may be resorted to simultaneously is when the Government obstruct even the silent prosecution of *swadeshi*. Thus if an order of prohibition is served upon an expert spinner going to teach or organize spinning, that order should be summarily disregarded and the teacher should court imprisonment. But in all other respects, in so far as I can judge at present, it will be best for every other part of India scrupulously to respect all orders and instructions whilst one part is deliberately taking the offensive and committing a deliberate breach of all the unmoral state laws it possibly can. Needless to add that any outbreak of violence in any other

part of India must necessarily injure and may even stop the experiment. The other parts will be expected to remain immovable and unperturbed, even though the people within the area of experiment may be imprisoned, riddled with bullets or otherwise ill-treated by the authorities. We must expect them to give a good account of themselves in every conceivable circumstance.

'The Momentous Issue'

*Young India*, 10 Nov. 1921

#### 41. THE RIGHT AND USE OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

*Swaraj*, the Khilafat, the Punjab occupy a subordinate place to the issue sprung upon the country by the Government. We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make any further progress towards our goal. The Government would kill us if they could by a flank attack. To accept defeat in the matter of free speech and free association is to court disaster. If the Government is allowed to destroy non-violent activities in the country, however dangerous they may be to its existence, even the Moderates' work must come to a standstill. In the general interest, therefore, we must defend these elementary rights with our lives. We cannot be coerced into welcoming the Prince nor can we be coerced into disbanding volunteer associations or giving up any other activities which we may deem desirable for our growth.

The safest and the quickest way to defend these rights is to ignore the restriction. We must speak the Truth under a shower of bullets. We must band together in the face of bayonets. No cost is too great for purchasing these fundamental rights. And on this there can be no compromise, no parleying, no conference. Withdrawal of notifications of disbandment and prohibition orders and discharge of all who are imprisoned for non-violent activities must precede any conference or settlement. We must be content to die, if we cannot live as free men and women

I wish I could persuade everybody that civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man. Civil disobedience is never followed by anarchy. Criminal disobedience can lead to it. Every State puts down criminal disobedience by force. It perishes, if it does not. But to put down civil disobedience is to attempt to imprison conscience. Civil disobedience can only lead to strength and purity. A civil resister never uses arms and hence he is harmless to a State that is at all willing to listen to the voice of public opinion. He is dangerous for an autocratic State, for he brings about its fall by engaging public opinion upon the matter for which he resists the State. Civil disobedience, therefore, becomes a sacred duty when the State has become lawless, or which is the same thing, corrupt. And a citizen that barter with such a State shares its corruption or lawlessness.

It is, therefore, possible to question the wisdom of applying civil disobedience in respect of a particular act or law; it is possible to advise delay and caution. But the right itself cannot be allowed to be questioned. It is a birthright that cannot be surrendered without surrender of one's self-respect.

At the same time that the right of civil disobedience is insisted upon, its use must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. Its area as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case. In the present case, therefore, aggressive civil disobedience should be confined to a vindication of the right of free speech and free association. In other words, non-co-operation, so long as it remains non-violent, must be allowed to continue without let or hindrance. When that position is attained it is time for a representative conference to be summoned for the settlement of Khilafat, the Punjab and *swaraj* but not till then.

## 42. THE PRACTICE OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

We have, very often, said in *Navajivan* that civil disobedience may be practised not only towards those whom we regard as our enemies or those who regard us as enemies, but also towards those whom we regard as our friends or our elders. It is now time to apply this to the Congress. The constitutional changes which it is necessary to bring about are stated elsewhere in this issue. Ordinarily, however, the Congress Committee is not authorized to make these changes. They can be made only by amending the constitution. The Congress alone is authorized to amend it. This power is not vested in the Congress Committee. The latter would have to make use of its extraordinary powers in order to do so. The use of such powers may also be called 'civil disobedience' of the law. Not only has every person and every organization the right to practise this if occasion arises, but it may become even their duty to do so.

If we recognize the necessity of the reforms suggested by me, this is now our duty. This matter should certainly be discussed at the Congress session. The rule which permits the purchase of yarn to be contributed must be annulled because, not only has spinning gained nothing by it but, on the contrary, it has led to an increase in hypocrisy and falsehood. If the Congress Committee does not make this necessary change, it may be regarded as having failed in its duty, because the public will be wasting a few months. Perhaps, there would have been room for difference of opinion on this subject if Deshbandhu had not died and if Lord Birkenhead had not made his speech; but there is no such room left now. It may be that some members of the Congress Committee do not accept the immediate necessity of making the change; in that case, they have no right to practise civil disobedience and, hence, I have stated that the Congress Committee can make such changes only by near, if not complete, unanimity.

The necessity of making such changes is not a sufficient ground for offering civil disobedience. Those against whom it is offered must also be benefited by it. This condition is wholly fulfilled in this case as the above changes are necessary only for the benefit of the Congress. The second condition is that



those who practise such disobedience must bear no ill will. This is implied in its very name, as 'civility' is opposed to ill will. Moreover, how can there be any ill will when we only wish the Congress well? My purpose in writing this article is not to make anyone declare against his wishes that the constitution should indeed be changed. In this matter, too, all concerned should make use of their independent judgement. Those, too, who feel that changing the constitution in this manner by the Congress Committee would result in greater harm than good, they too should in duty oppose these changes being made by the Congress Committee, although they may accept the necessity for making them.

Civil disobedience cannot—it should not—be practised because someone else asks us to do so. It should be practised only when it seems appropriate to us; then alone is it worth the name, then alone it is worth practising. This is because human beings do not have strength to do a thing about which they are themselves not convinced, and civil disobedience relies for its success solely on the strength of the individual.

The chief purpose of writing this article is to describe the circumstances in which civil disobedience may be practised. I regard myself as an expert on the subject, I regard it as my own independent discovery, and I look upon it as my *dharma* to show from time to time its applicability and its limitations. Not only am I totally unconcerned whether the changes are made or not but I regard them as harmful if everyone does not exercise his independent judgement. This criticism applies particularly to those who regard themselves as my followers. I do not approve of blind worship. I am very much opposed to it. *Swaraj* cannot be secured by it and, if secured, cannot be maintained. Hence I would like to get work out of my 'followers' so as to utilize also their intelligence. If we make the above changes intelligently and honestly practise them, I expect very good results to follow.

'Civil Disobedience in the Congress' (G.)

*Navajivan*, 2 Aug. 1925

## 43. TRIAL OF STRENGTH

Ahmedabad,

January 22, 1930

The great trial of strength in this country is at hand. Events now depend entirely on the British Government, for we shall not in any circumstances, now or in the future, participate in any conference unless it is called to consider our complete secession from Great Britain. The day has passed when we could accept anything less than that.

We are engaged, as the world must know, in a struggle for the absolute severance of the present British connection and we shall not rest until that aim has been achieved.

We have begun now. You shall find in every section of the land millions of our men and women in their cottages spinning hour after hour. This means a nationwide boycott of foreign-spun cloths, and in time must mean the end of British predominance in an industry which is the principal reason for the presence of your British troops in this country.

Asked to outline the details of his plans for the execution of his *crusade of civil disobedience*, Gandhi replied

I am not yet sure of the form it will take. I have come here and in my seclusion I hope to evolve a plan of civil resistance which will not cause destruction or involve bloodshed, but which will be large enough to make the impression I desire. That is all I am doing here, otherwise, as you can see, I am spinning

He lapsed here into a long theoretical explanation of the necessity for careful preparation. He was not certain that the precise moment had arrived which would ensure the success of this first step in the coming revolution, but it would be a guide the measure of its success would be a guide to him. He went on to explain:

It is absolutely necessary for the person controlling such a movement to keep himself in tune with the voice of his followers, and therefore he must be as impervious to outside influences as he has to be sensitive to every little thing that goes on within.

I asked Gandhi if it was not possible that he might yet be able to avoid the extreme measures to which he was proceeding. When he replied promptly in the affirmative and said that the slightest gesture from the British Government would work the miracle, I inquired what that gesture in his view should involve. He replied.

Any real gesture from the British Government and the British people, or any unexpected combination, spontaneous and healthy among ourselves, which would in itself constitute sufficient pressure to compel world attention, and not merely the attention of the British people.

That meant, of course, combination with extremists, but what kind of gesture from Britain?

Supposing the British Cabinet were to say tomorrow, 'We are prepared to consider and further a scheme of Indian independence', and produce an atmosphere, as it can certainly do, congenial to the framing of such a scheme, that would automatically prevent any further preparation for civil disobedience.

Does not the proposed Round Table Conference offer you an opportunity for full discussion in this respect?

He answered with some emphasis

No, not in any shape or form. Because the Round Table Conference scheme so far as I have understood it from authentic sources is designed to discuss anything between a form of government infinitely less than the present and Dominion Status. There is, for example, this proposition made by responsible ex-officials that powers hitherto enjoyed by the people of India, such as they are now, should be taken away, because these critics actually suggest that we have proved ourselves unworthy of the powers. Therefore, such a Round Table Conference, where even the capacity of India for full freedom is in question, has no place for me whatever. It is entirely out of the question that I should attend. I can only attend a conference which is pledged not to consider how much power India should or should not enjoy, but to consider ways and means of framing a scheme of complete indepen-

dence. This is the only conference I could consider for a moment attending

I asked Gandhi bluntly at this point whether he seriously believed his methods would frighten the British Government into submission to his demands

It all depends on the response of the people I am confident, but I am not certain I think the time is ripe now to formulate my plans It is my own limitations that make it impossible for me to penetrate the surrounding darkness

In other words, the atmosphere round me is depressing, and there are undoubtedly forces of violence to be seen on the surface which I may not be able to control

But, as I have said, true non-violence which I advocate might yet be able to circumvent and rise superior even to these forces, but being myself an imperfect instrument I may not be able readily to lay my hands on the proper form of non-violence which will meet these circumstances It is this menacing force of violence which threatens the land which must first be sterilized

Gandhi emphasized here that civil disobedience was the extreme limit of action that he would countenance declaring it to be the limit of non-violence, anything more involving a programme of violence, to which he would never be a party

Replying to a further question he said

The strength of the extremists is not great today, but is growing

But supposing the extremists got out of hand and the responsibility for bloodshed becomes theirs, and therefore yours what then? Supposing the British Government are then forced to take the action which the British public will demand of them, and they make arrests and arrest you what then? He replied solemnly

I am not afraid of arrest and it is quite open for the British Government to precipitate the reign of violence as they have done in the past What the consequences then will be I cannot say but such a step would, in my opinion, be the sheerest folly

Then your view of the immediate future is what?

The immediate future is, for a man so optimistic as I am, quite bright, but if I were to calculate the pros and cons and to enter into the arithmetic of the situation, I must confess that the problem is insoluble. I do not know what is going to happen. I am not in the happy position of a general who knows beforehand the whole of his plan, who works according to a time-table, and can profess to be able to forecast results with certainty.

But I can assure you of this much. The trial of strength in India is now at hand. The outcome depends entirely on the British Government.

There are two courses which they may pursue. One way is the old panicky way which will lead to Dyerism, to frightfulness and mad repression, and then anarchy. The other course is the way of the wise man who reflects on his past sins, repents, and retraces his steps. Let us hope.

Interview to the *Daily Express*  
*The Searchlight*, 12 Feb. 1930

#### 44. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

To the many known and still more unknown English friends, I owe perhaps a word on the eve of what may end in being a life-and-death struggle. In spite of myself I tried to believe in the possibility of self-respecting Congressmen attending the proposed Round Table Conference. I had my doubts because I knew that the Congress, though it is admittedly the most representative organization in the country, had no adequate power behind it for vindicating its position. It could therefore be represented at the Conference, only if it knew that the British Government and people had, either through a generous impulse, or through the pressure of world opinion, decided to grant immediate Dominion Status, and that the Conference was to meet in order to discuss not anything the different groups liked but to discover the contents of a Do-

minion Status constitution. The Viceroy made it clear in no uncertain terms that he could give no such assurance. Such being the case, consistently with its past declaration and with the national interest of which the Congress claims to be the principal trustee, clearly it could not allow itself to be represented at the Conference. But it may be asked: Granting that the Congress could not in the circumstances be expected to send its representatives, where was the necessity for going from Dominion Status to independence? The answer is plain. Organizations like men, if they are to command respect and grow, must have a sense of honour and must fulfil their promises. Well, the Congress promised at Calcutta to change the creed to independence if Dominion Status was not forthcoming by the 31st of December 1929. It did not come nor was there any prospect of its coming for certain in the immediate future. The Congress therefore had no other course left open, if it was not 'to commit suicide', but to declare its immediate objective to be complete independence instead of Dominion Status.

But what is there intrinsically wrong in wanting independence? It is not possible for me to understand this opposition from sober Englishmen to the enunciation of an inalienable right of every nation to be independent except on the supposition that even they, the sober Englishmen, do not want India to be free.

'But you are not fit for independence', say some. Surely it is for us to judge whether we are fit or not. And granting that we are not, there is nothing wrong or immoral in our aspiring after independence and in the attempt rendering ourselves fitter day by day. We shall never be fit being taught to feel helpless and to rely upon the British bayonet to keep us from fighting among ourselves or from being devoured by our neighbours. If we have to go through the agonies of a civil war or a foreign invasion, it won't be a new thing in the history of nations that have struggled for freedom. England has gone through both the experiences. After all freedom is not a hot-house growth.

It is open to those English friends who are sincerely anxious for India's welfare to assist India in her fight for freedom and on her terms. She knows best what she needs. Complete in-

dependence does not mean arrogant isolation or a superior disdain for all help. But it does mean complete severance of the British bondage, be it ever so slight or well concealed. The opposition, therefore, to the demand for immediate independence raises the strongest suspicions about the good intentions of those who have conceived the idea of the Conference. It must be clearly understood that the largest nationalist party in India will no longer submit to the position of a dependent nation or to the process of helpless exploitation. It will run any risk to be free from the double curse.

Is it not now intelligible why, notwithstanding its undoubted risks, I am planning some sort of civil disobedience so as to get together all the non-violent forces and see if it stems the tide of onrushing violence? Hatred and ill will there undoubtedly are in the air. They are bound sooner or later to burst into acts of fury if they are not anticipated in time. The conviction has deepened in me that civil disobedience alone can stop the bursting of that fury. The nation wants to feel its power more even than to have independence. Possession of such power is independence.

That civil disobedience may resolve itself into violent disobedience is, I am sorry to have to confess, not an unlikely event. But I know that it will not be the cause of it. Violence is there already corroding the whole body politic. Civil disobedience will be but a purifying process and may bring to the surface what is burrowing under and into the whole body. And British officials, if they choose, may regulate civil disobedience so as to sterilize the forces of violence. But whether they do so, or whether, as many of us fear, they will, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, provoke violence, my course is clear. With the evidence I have of the condition of the country and with the unquenchable faith I have in the method of civil resistance, I must not be deterred from the course the inward voice seems to be leading me to.

But whatever I do and whatever happens, my English friends will accept my word, that whilst I am impatient to break the British bondage, I am no enemy of Britain.

‘To English Friends’

*Young India*, 23 Jan. 1930

## 45. RESPONSIBILITY FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

‘HATE DISSOLVES IN THE PRESENCE OF LOVE.’<sup>1</sup>

In the opinion of the Working Committee civil disobedience should be initiated and controlled by those who believe in non-violence for the purpose of achieving *purna swaraj* as an article of faith, and as the Congress contains in its organization not merely such men and women, but also those who accept non-violence as a policy essential in the existing circumstances in the country, the Working Committee welcomes the proposal of Mahatma Gandhi and authorizes him and those working with him who believe in non-violence as an article of faith to the extent above indicated to start civil disobedience as and when they desire and in the manner and to the extent they decide. The Working Committee trusts that when the campaign is actually in action all Congressmen and others will extend to the civil resisters their full co-operation in every way possible, and that they will observe and preserve complete non-violence notwithstanding any provocation that may be offered. The Working Committee further hopes that in the event of a mass movement taking place, all those who are rendering voluntary co-operation to the Government, such as lawyers, and those who are receiving so-called benefits from it, such as students, will withdraw their co-operation or renounce benefits as the case may be, and throw themselves into the final struggle for freedom. The Working Committee trusts, that in the event of the leaders being arrested and imprisoned, those who are left behind and have the spirit of sacrifice and service in them, will carry on the Congress organization, and guide the movement to the best of their ability.

This resolution<sup>2</sup> of the Working Committee gives me my charter of freedom if it also binds me in the tightest chains. It is the formula of which I have been in search these long and weary months. For me the resolution is not so much a political as a religious effort. My difficulty was fundamental. I saw that I could not work out *ahimsa* through an organization holding a variety of mentalities. It could not be subject to the decision of majorities. To be consistent with itself, it might have to be inconsistent with the whole world.

A person who has a choice before him is ever exposed to temptation. The instinct of those, therefore, with whom non-violence is a policy, when tempted by violence, may fail them.



That of those who have no remedy but non-violence open to them can never fail them if they have non-violence in them in reality. Hence the necessity for freedom from Congress control And I was thankful that the members of the Working Committee saw the utter correctness of my position.

It is to be hoped that no one will misunderstand the position. Here there is no question of superiority. Those who hold non-violence for the attainment of freedom as an article of faith are in no way superior to those with whom it is a mere policy, even as there is no such inequality between brown men and yellow men. Each acts according to his lights.

The responsibility devolving on me is the greatest I have ever undertaken. It was irresistible. But all will be well, if it is *ahimsa* that is guiding me. For the seer who knew what he gave to the world has said, 'Hate dissolves in the presence of *ahimsa*.' The true rendering of the word in English is love or charity. And does not the Bible say:

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour,  
Believeth all things,  
Hopeth all things,  
Never faileth.<sup>3</sup>

Civil disobedience is sometimes a peremptory demand of love. Dangerous it undoubtedly is, but no more than the encircling violence. Civil disobedience is the only non-violent escape from its soul-destroying heat. The danger lies only in one direction, in the outbreak of violence side by the side with civil disobedience. If it does I know now the way; not the retracing as at the time of Bardoli. The struggle, in freedom's battle, of non-violence against violence, no matter from what quarter the latter comes, must continue till a single representative is left alive. More no man can do, to do less would be tantamount to want of faith.

'Never Faileth'

*Young India*, 20 Feb. 1930

<sup>1</sup> *Ahimsa Prathishtayam Tat Sannidhau Varnatyagaha*, Patanjali's *Yogadarshanam*, II, 35

<sup>2</sup> Adopted on 15 February 1930 at Ahmedabad

<sup>3</sup> Corinthians I, xiii.

## 46. LOYALTY AND DISLOYALTY

There is no halfway house between active loyalty and active disloyalty. There is much truth in the late Justice Stephen's remark that a man to prove himself not guilty of disaffection must prove himself to be actively affectionate. In these days of democracy there is no such thing as active loyalty to a person. You are therefore loyal or disloyal to institutions. When, therefore, you are disloyal you seek not to destroy persons but institutions. The present State is an institution which, if one knows it, can never evoke loyalty. It is corrupt. Many of its laws governing the conduct of persons are positively inhuman. Their administration is worse. Often the will of one person is the law. It may safely be said that there are as many rulers as there are districts in this country. These, called Collectors, combine in their own persons the executive as well as the judicial functions. Though their acts are supposed to be governed by laws in themselves highly defective, these rulers are often capricious and regulated by nothing but their own whims and fancies. They represent not the interests of the people but those of their foreign masters or principals. These (nearly three hundred) men form an almost secret corporation, the most powerful in the world. They are required to find a fixed minimum of revenue, they have therefore often been found to be most unscrupulous in their dealings with the people.

This system of government is confessedly based upon a merciless exploitation of unnumbered millions of the inhabitants of India. From the village Headmen to their personal assistants these satraps have created a class of subordinates who, whilst they cringe before their foreign masters, in their constant dealings with the people act so irresponsibly and so harshly as to demoralize them and by a system of terrorism render them incapable of resisting corruption. It is then the duty of those who have realized the awful evil of the system of Indian Government to be disloyal to it and actively and openly to preach disloyalty. Indeed, loyalty to a State so corrupt is a sin, disloyalty a virtue.

The spectacle of three hundred million people being cowed down by living in the dread of three hundred men is demor-

alizing alike for the despots as for the victims. It is the duty of those who have realized the evil nature of the system, however attractive some of its features may, torn from their context, appear to be, to destroy it without delay. It is their clear duty to run any risk to achieve the end.

But it must be equally clear that it would be cowardly for three hundred million people to seek to destroy the three hundred authors or administrators of the system. It is a sign of gross ignorance to devise means of destroying these administrators or their hirelings. Moreover they are but creatures of circumstances. The purest man entering the system will be affected by it and will be instrumental in propagating the evil. The remedy therefore naturally is not being enraged against the administrators and therefore hurting them, but to non-co-operate with the system by withdrawing all the voluntary assistance possible and refusing all its so-called benefits. A little reflection will show that civil disobedience is a necessary part of non-co-operation. You assist an administration most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil administration never deserves such allegiance. Allegiance to it means partaking of the evil. A good man will therefore resist an evil system or administration with his whole soul. Disobedience of the law of an evil State is therefore a duty. Violent disobedience deals with men who can be replaced. It leaves the evil itself untouched and often accentuates it. Non-violent, i.e., civil, disobedience is the only and the most successful remedy and is obligatory upon him who would dissociate himself from evil.

There is danger in civil disobedience only because it is still only a partially tried remedy and has always to be tried in an atmosphere surcharged with violence. For when tyranny is rampant much rage is generated among the victims. It remains latent because of their weakness and bursts in all its fury on the slightest pretext. Civil disobedience is a sovereign method of transmuting this undisciplined life-destroying latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy whose use ensures absolute success. The attendant risk is nothing compared to the result promised. When the world has become familiar with its use and when it has had a series of demonstrations of its successful working, there will be less risk in civil disobedience

than there is in aviation, in spite of that science having reached a high stage of development.

‘Duty of Disloyalty’

*Young India*, 27 Mar. 1930

#### 47. CIVIL RESISTANCE AND DISOBEDIENCE

June 4, 1934

‘Civil resistance’ is a wider term, and also indicative of respect. Civil disobedience is not necessarily an accurate expression of the attitude indicated in ‘civil resistance’. ‘Civil disobedience’ may also indicate an attitude of the mind. The term ‘civil disobedience’ was first used by Thoreau. I didn’t like it because it didn’t suggest all that I had in mind. Looking for a new phrase, I fixed upon ‘civil resistance’. The current phrase was ‘passive resistance’. But my way of resistance or the force which I had in mind was not passive. It was active, but ‘active’ might also mean violent. The word ‘civil’ suggests nothing but non-violence. I, therefore, joined it with ‘resistance’.

The pledge taken at the start of the Dandi March certainly did not mean that I would remain in jail till *swaraj* was won. Nor is it always in our hands to be in jail.

If the Yeravda Pact required a change in the Award<sup>1</sup> by the Government, it also required the people to discharge their debt to *Harijans*. Because the Government was aware of this condition, it was by implication bound to give me facilities for fulfilling it. The Government had accepted a similar argument during my first term of imprisonment and given me the necessary concession. This correspondence has been published. How can they go back on it now?

I have had no hand in Jamnalalji’s appointment. But I approve of it. The post of secretary was not filled because one secretary is out. If nobody was available, even that post would have had to be filled. There is no principle involved in such matters, the only criterion being propriety. What is wrong in the same person being President and Treasurer?

What you say concerning the Parliamentary Board is correct. The priest ministers at the wedding, but cannot help the partners to run their home. If we let ourselves be seen as we are some day we shall become what we ought to be.

Now nothing till the 14th. However, if there is anything special I will write or ask somebody to write.

Letter to Mathuradas Trikumji (G.)

*Bahuni Prasadi*, pp. 146-7

<sup>1</sup> Communal Award

#### 48. READINESS FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

New Delhi,  
April 3, 1939

A clear understanding of the suspension of civil disobedience in the States is necessary if the people are to reap the full benefit of it. One result not unexpected seems to have been that some States have stiffened their attitude and are resorting to repression they had not perhaps thought of before suspension. Where this happens there is no cause for losing heart. Repression itself affords a training in *satyagraha*, even as an unsought war affords a training for the soldier. *Satyagrahis* should discover the causes of repression. They will find that repressed people are easily frightened by the slightest show of force and are unprepared for suffering and self-sacrifice. This is then the time for learning the first lessons of *satyagraha*. Those who know anything of this matchless force should teach their neighbours to bear repression not weakly and helplessly but bravely and knowingly. Thus, for example, a State declares an association illegal. The members may submit either because of fear of punishment or knowingly because they do not yet wish to offer civil disobedience. In the latter case, they husband their energy and develop the will to resist non-violently. Individual members of the association will still carry on activities that may not be regarded as in themselves illegal. They will also carry on constitutional agitation to secure legal

recognition for their organization. And if in spite of voluntarily working within the four corners of the local laws workers are arrested or otherwise ill-treated, they would cheerfully submit to the sufferings involved. So doing they will examine themselves whether they bear any ill will or anger towards their persecutors, they will ask themselves whether they feel the presence of God as their true Helper and Guide in their difficulties. Indeed such training if properly and persistently taken will generate in the learners a power of calm, non-violent resistance which in itself will become invincible and therefore may render further effort by way of civil disobedience wholly unnecessary.

I am afraid I must plead guilty to being over-confident and hasty in launching previous civil disobedience campaigns. No harm seems to have accrued to the country because I had always my hand on the pulse of the country and, thank God, had no hesitation in retracing the step taken if I scented danger or discovered an error of judgement or calculation. This much harm must, however, be admitted. The people having become used to laxity about previous preparation now find it irksome to conform to the strictness in the observance of the unexciting rules of preparation. And yet they are much the most important part of *satyagraha* training. Potent and active non-violence cannot be cultivated unless the candidate goes through the necessary stages which require a lot of plodding. If, however, I have succeeded in showing that repression, if properly understood, evokes natural and spontaneous resistance in a *satyagrahi*, perhaps this knowledge will rob the constructive effort and the waiting of their seeming insipidity. Indeed the fact that these things appear insipid betrays want of appreciation of *satyagraha* and the beauty and efficacy of non-violence. In other words, the spirit of *satyagraha* has not sunk deep and violence still lurks even though unconsciously in the seeker's breast.

I hope, therefore, that repression, wherever it is resorted to, will not depress the repressed people but will accelerate the pace of the constructive effort. It is necessary so far as it is possible to convince the powers that be of our absolutely non-violent intention. Such conviction is half the battle won. In order to carry this conviction home there must be sufficient

curb on our speech and writing as our action must be non-violent beyond doubt.

'The States'

*Haryana*, 8 Apr. 1939

#### 49. MASS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, DISCIPLINE, AND TIMING

Sevagram,  
March 5, 1940

Everybody is asking me not whether but when I am to call the country to civil disobedience. Some of my questioners are the most sober among co-workers. To them the Patna resolution has no other meaning than that the struggle's coming is a question of days. It is proof that the country, or that part of it that has hitherto taken part in the struggle for freedom, is tired of waiting and suspense. It is heartening to think that there are in the country so many persons who count no sacrifice too dear for gaining independence.

While, therefore, I admire the zeal of my questioners, I must warn them against being impatient. There is nothing in the resolution to warrant the belief that the atmosphere is suitable for declaring civil disobedience. It will be suicidal to declare it when there is so much indiscipline and violence within the Congress itself. Congressmen will make a serious mistake if they do not give full weight to my words. I cannot, will not, start mass civil disobedience so long as I am not convinced that there is enough discipline and enough non-violence in Congress ranks. The apathy about the Constructive Programme, i.e., spinning and sales of *khadi*, I take to be positive signs of unbelief. Battle through such instruments is foredoomed to failure. Such persons should know that I am not their man. If there is no hope of attaining the necessary measure of discipline and non-violence, it would be better to let me retire from leadership.

Let it be clearly understood that I cannot be hustled into precipitating the struggle. They err grievously who think that I can ever declare civil disobedience, having been driven thereto by the so-called leftists. I make no such distinction between

rightists and leftists. Both are my co-workers and friends. He will be a bold man who can with any measure of certainty draw the line of demarcation between leftists and rightists. Congressmen and non-Congressmen should also know that, even if the whole country were to turn against me, I must, when the time comes, fight single-handed. The others have or may have weapons besides non-violence. I have no choice. Being the author of non-violent technique in the political field, I am bound to fight when I feel the urge from within.

It is inherent in the technique that I never know the timetable in advance. The call may come at any time. It need not be described as from God. The inner urge is a current phrase easily understood. Everybody sometimes acts upon the inner urge. Such action need not always be right. But there is no other explanation possible for certain actions.

The thought often comes to me that it would be a good thing if the Congress could forget me. I do sometimes feel that with my strange views of life I am a misfit in the Congress. Whatever special qualifications I may possess and for which the Congress and the country may have use can perhaps be better utilized if I were wholly cut off from the Congress. But I know that this severance cannot be brought about mechanically or violently. It will come in its own time, if it has to come. Only Congressmen should know my limitations and should not be surprised or grieved if they find me stiff and unbending. I ask them to believe me when I say that I am incapable of acting without the fulfilment of the conditions laid down for declaring mass civil disobedience.

‘When?’

*Haryana*, 9 Mar. 1940

## 50. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND ACTIVE NON-VIOLENCE

Sevagram,

May 28, 1940

The reader will find in another column Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia's plea for immediate civil disobedience. I endorse his



prescription for ensuring world peace. For enforcing the acceptance of his prescription he would have immediate civil disobedience. Here I must join issue. If Dr. Lohia subscribes to my conception of the working of non-violence, he will at once admit that the present is no atmosphere for influencing the Britisher in the right direction through civil disobedience. Dr. Lohia agrees that the British Government should not be embarrassed. I fear that any step towards direct action is bound to cause them embarrassment. If I start now, the whole purpose of civil disobedience will be defeated.

I would unhesitatingly declare civil disobedience if the country was demonstrably non-violent and disciplined. But unfortunately we have many groups outside the Congress who believe in neither non-violence nor civil disobedience. In the Congress itself there are all shades of opinion about the efficacy of non-violence. Congressmen who believe in the application of non-violence for the defence of India can be counted on the finger-tips. Though we have made great strides towards non-violence, we have not arrived at a stage when we can hope to be unconquerable. Any false step at the present time may end in the loss of the great moral prestige the Congress has gained. We have sufficiently demonstrated that the Congress has done with imperialism, and that it will not be satisfied with anything less than the unfettered right of self-determination.

If the British Government will not *suo motu* declare India as a free country having the right to determine her own status and constitution, I am of opinion that we should wait till the heat of the battle in the heart of the Allied countries subsides and the future is clearer than it is. We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin. That is not the way of non-violence.

But we shall have many opportunities of demonstrating our power if we really have it. We can make it felt at the time of peace which must come whichever party wins.

Have we got the power? Is India at ease without having up-to-date arms? Does not India feel helpless without the ability to defend herself against aggression? Do even Congressmen feel secure? Or do they not feel that for some years to come at any rate India will have to be helped by Britain or some other Power? If such is our unfortunate plight, how can we hope to

make an effective contribution towards an honourable peace after the war or universal disarmament? We must first demonstrate the efficacy of non-violence of the strong in our own country before we can expect to influence the tremendously armed Powers of the West.

But many Congressmen are playing at non-violence. They think in terms of civil disobedience anyhow meaning the filling of jails. This is a childish interpretation of the great force that civil disobedience is. I must continue to repeat, even though it may cause nausea, that prison-going without the backing of honest constructive effort and goodwill in the heart for the wrongdoer is violence and therefore forbidden in *satyagraha*. Force generated by non-violence is infinitely greater than the force of all the arms invented by man's ingenuity. Non-violence, therefore, is the decisive factor in civil disobedience. At this the most critical moment in India's history, I will not play with the force whose hidden possibilities I have been humbly trying to explore now for nearly half a century. Fortunately in the last resort I have myself to fall back upon. I have been told that people cannot be non-violent overnight. I have never contended they can. But I have held that by proper training they can be if they have the will.

Active non-violence is necessary for those who will offer civil disobedience, but the will and proper training are enough for the people to co-operate with those who are chosen for civil disobedience. The constructive work prescribed by the Congress is the proper training. Given the preparation, the Congress will make perhaps the most effective contribution towards ending the war in the right way. Disarmament of India though compulsory in origin, if it is voluntarily adopted by the nation as a virtue and if India makes a declaration that she will not defend herself with arms, can materially influence the European situation. Those, therefore, who wish to see India realize her destiny through non-violence should devote every ounce of their energy towards the fulfilment of the Constructive Programme in right earnest without any thought of civil disobedience.

'Not Yet'

*Haryan*, 1 June 1940

## 51. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

Sevagram,

October 15, 1940

I have had three days' discussion with the Working Committee. During it I unfolded my plan of civil disobedience in so far as I was able to envisage it. Although I have sole charge of the campaign, I could not think of taking the first step without consultation with the members of the Working Committee. In non-violent action one has to carry the co-workers with one through the mind and the heart. There is no other way to enforce discipline or obedience to instructions. I must admit that it was not plain sailing for me. There was stubborn dissent from two members. I tried hard to carry conviction to them but I fear I failed. They will, however, yield obedience so far as it is possible for them for the sake of discipline. The difference of opinion solely centred round the quantity of civil disobedience and the restrictions with which it was hedged.

I disclose this part of the discussion to show that my plan will fall short of the expectations of those whom the dissenters represent. I would simply say to them, 'Wait patiently and see what happens. Carry out instructions to the best of your ability. Do nothing to thwart the plan. If your reason rebels against it, you will serve the cause by seceding and educating the people along your own lines. That would be straight, brave and stimulating, in that the people will learn to appraise the value of different methods. You will cause confusion by preaching from the Congress platform anything contrary to the official programme, especially when the whole organization becomes like an army. It matters little whether one person offers civil disobedience or many. The rest have to render such support as they may be called upon to do.'

The plan is simply this. Direct action will be commenced by Shri Vinoba Bhave and for the time being confined to him only. And since it is to be confined to individual civil disobedience and that too of him only, it will be so conducted by him as to exclude others directly or indirectly. But since it is concerned with freedom of speech, the public will be involved to an extent. It is open to them either to listen to him or not.

But much will depend upon what the Government wish to

do. In spite of all attempts to confine civil disobedience to individuals and for the moment to one only, they can precipitate a crisis by making it a crime to listen to him or read anything written by him. But I think and believe that they do not want to invite any trouble, though they hold themselves in readiness to cope with every trouble that may face them.

I have discussed with Shri Vinoba various plans so as to avoid all unnecessary friction or risks. The idea is to make all action as strictly non-violent as is humanly possible. One man's violence, veiled or open, cannot go beyond a certain limit, but within that limit it would be effective. One man's non-violent action would be despised and ridiculed by the non-believer in it. In truth, while the effect of a given violent action can be reduced to mathematical terms, that of non-violent action defies all calculation and has been known to falsify many that have been hazarded. How far I shall be able to present an example of unadulterated non-violence remains to be seen.

Who is Vinoba Bhave and why has he been selected? He is an undergraduate having left college after my return to India in 1915. He is a Sanskrit scholar. He joined the Ashram<sup>1</sup> almost at its inception. He was among the first members. In order to better qualify himself he took one year's leave to prosecute further studies in Sanskrit. And, practically at the same hour at which he had left the Ashram a year before, he walked into it without notice. I had forgotten that he was due to arrive that day. He has taken part in every menial activity of the Ashram from scavenging to cooking. Though he has a marvellous memory and is a student by nature, he has devoted the largest part of his time to spinning in which he has specialized as very few have. He believes in universal spinning being the central activity which will remove the poverty in the villages and put life into their deadness. Being a born teacher he has been of the utmost assistance to Ashadevi<sup>2</sup> in her development of the scheme of education through handicrafts. Shri Vinoba has produced a text-book taking spinning as the handicraft. It is original in conception. He has made scoffers realize that spinning is the handicraft *par excellence* which lends itself to being effectively used for basic education. He has

revolutionized *takli*-spinning and drawn out its hitherto unknown possibilities. For perfect spinning probably he has no rival in all India.

He has abolished every trace of untouchability from his heart. He believes in communal unity with the same passion that I have. In order to know the best mind of Islam he gave one year to the study of the Koran in the original. He therefore learnt Arabic. He found this study necessary for cultivating a living contact with the Muslims living in his neighbourhood.

He has an army of disciples and workers who would rise to any sacrifice at his bidding. He is responsible for producing a young man<sup>3</sup> who has dedicated himself to the service of lepers. Though an utter stranger to medicine this worker has by singular devotion mastered the method of treatment of lepers and is now running several clinics for their care. Hundreds owe their cure to his labours. He has now published a handbook in Marathi for the treatment of lepers. Vinoba was for years Director of the Mahila Ashram in Wardha. His devotion to the cause of *Daridranarayan* took him first to a village near Wardha, and now he has gone still further and lives in Paunar, five miles from Wardha, from where he has established contact with villages through the disciples he has trained.

He believes in the necessity of the political independence of India. He is an accurate student of history. But he believes that real independence of the villagers is impossible without the Constructive Programme of which *khadi* is the centre. He believes that the *charkha* is the most suitable outward symbol of non-violence which has become an integral part of his life. He has taken an active part in the previous *satyagraha* campaigns. He has never been in the limelight on the political platform. With many co-workers he believes that silent constructive work with civil disobedience in the background is far more effective than the already heavily crowded political platform. And he thoroughly believes that non-violent resistance is impossible without a heart-belief in and practice of constructive work.

Vinoba is an out-and-out war resister. But he respects equally with his own the conscience of those who, whilst not

being out-and-out war resisters, have yet strong conscientious objection to participation in the present war. Though Vinoba represents both the types, I may want to select another who will represent only one type, namely, conscientious objection to participation in the present war.

It was necessary to introduce Vinoba at length to the public in order to justify my choice. This will perhaps be the last civil disobedience struggle which I shall have conducted. Naturally I would want it to be as flawless as it can be. Moreover the Congress has declared that it will avoid all avoidable embarrassment to the Government consistently with its own existence. For that reason too I have to strive to produce the highest quality irrespective of quantity.

But Vinoba must fail, as I must, if we do not represent the Congress, let alone the whole nation. And we shall certainly not represent either if they do not give us full-hearted co-operation which is ceaseless prosecution of the Constructive Programme. It is not vocal co-operation that is required. It is co-operation in work that is needed. The signs of such co-operation will be phenomenal progress in spinning, complete disappearance of untouchability, an increasing friendliness between communities, and an increasing sense of justice in every walk of life. Unless rock-bottom justice and equality pervade society, surely there is no non-violent atmosphere. Above all there should be no civil disobedience but what is sanctioned by me. This is peremptory obligation binding on every Congressman. If it is disregarded, there is no co-operation. The representative character belonging to Vinoba and me is then challenged. And I can say with confidence that, if the full-hearted co-operation I want is forthcoming, not only will the issue of freedom of speech be decided in our favour but we shall have gone very near independence. Let those who will, take me at my word. They will have lost nothing and will find that they had contributed greatly to the movement of freedom through truthful and non-violent means.

Let me repeat the issue. On the surface it is incredibly narrow—the right to preach against war as war or participation in the present war. Both are matters of conscience for those who hold either view. Both are substantial rights. Their exercise can do no harm to the British if their pretension that

to all intents and purposes India is an independent country is at all true. If India is very much a dependency in fact as it is in law, whatever the British get from India can never be regarded as voluntary, it must be regarded as impressed. This battle of life and death cannot be won by impressed levies, however large. They may win if they have the moral backing of an India truly regarded as free. Non-violent Congress cannot wish ill to Britain. Nor can it help her through arms since it seeks to gain her own freedom not through arms but through unadulterated non-violence. And the Congress vanishes if, at the crucial moment, it suppresses itself for fear of consequences or otherwise by ceasing to preach non-violence through non-violent means. So when we probe the issue deep enough we discover that it is a matter of life and death for us. If we vindicate that right, all is well with us. If we do not, all is lost. We cannot then win *swaraj* through non-violent means.

I know that India has not one mind. There is a part of India that is war-minded and will learn the art of war through helping the British. The Congress has no desire, therefore, to surround ammunition factories or barracks and prevent people from doing what they like. We want to tell the people of India that, if they will win *swaraj* through non-violent means, they may not co-operate militarily with Britain in the prosecution of the war.

This right of preaching against participation in the war is being denied to us, and we have to fight against the denial. Therefore, while that right will be exercised only by those whom I may select for the purpose, all the other activities of the Congress will continue as before unless the Government interfere with them.

A question has been asked why, if I attach so much importance to quality, I do not offer civil resistance myself. I have already said that unlike as on previous occasions I do not wish to do so for the very good reason that my imprisonment is likely to cause greater embarrassment to the authorities than anything else the Congress can do. I want also to remain outside to cope with any contingency that may arise. My going to jail may be interpreted as a general invitation to all Congressmen to follow suit. They will not easily distinguish between my act and speech. Lastly, I do not know how things

will shape. I myself do not know the next step. I do not know the Government plan. I am a man of faith. My reliance is solely on God. One step is enough for me. The next He will make clear to me when the time for it comes. And who knows that I shall not be an instrument for bringing about peace not only between Britain and India but also between the warring nations of the earth. This last wish will not be taken for vanity by those who believe that my faith is not a sham but a reality greater than the fact that I am penning these lines.

‘Civil Disobedience’

*Haryan*, 20 Oct. 1940

<sup>1</sup> On 7 June 1916

<sup>2</sup> Ashadevi Arvanayakam

<sup>3</sup> Manohar Divan

## 52. INDIVIDUAL AND MASS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Panchgani,

[July] 29/30, 1944

Ninth August is a great day and it is the duty of all to observe it. But that part of the resolution which speaks of mass civil disobedience cannot be brought into force because the authority to put it into force was vested solely in me. Today I see no possibility of mass civil disobedience either according to that authority or according to circumstances.

Mass civil disobedience is one thing and the exercise of citizen's right and civil disobedience in pursuance of it is different. The people have been exercising the right of defensive individual civil disobedience since 1920. People in general may not understand the difference between mass civil disobedience and civil disobedience for the defence of individual citizen's rights. But it is necessary to know the differences.

On such occasions as August 9, people have to understand the difference, and exercise this right of individual civil disobedience for the defence of civil rights. In such places where it is necessary to take the permission of police for meetings, processions and such common civil rights, permission from the



police should be asked for. But, if such permission is not granted, people should exercise their civil right in spite of the refusal.

Talk to Bombay Congress Leaders  
Chief Commissioner's Office, Bombay  
File No. 3001/HP  
Courtesy: Government of Maharashtra

### 53. ACTING ACCORDING TO ONE'S CAPACITY

Mahabaleshwar,  
[Before 25 April 1945]

In your place I would not submit even if I were to die. But there is no one law for everyone. You should act solely according to your capacity. In any event seeing that you did not accept the notice, you should inform the authorities that you would not accept restrictions save of your own conscience and that you fully believed in non-violence and truth.

Letter to Ghanshvam Mirchandani  
*The Bombay Chronicle*, 26 April 1945

## § 4. Non-Co-operation

### 54. THE SCOPE OF NON-CO-OPERATION

Since there is no reason to hope that, before August 1, either the Khilafat issue will have been satisfactorily solved or a revision of the peace terms promised, we must get ready to start non-co-operation. The Committee is making preparations in this behalf. Meantime, the following can be done:

1. Not to subscribe to new loans.
2. Not to register one's name for recruitment in military or civil service.

The Government has no right to occupy Mesopotamia. Mandate is in fact nothing but occupation. Moreover, accord-

ing to newspaper reports, the Arabs do not like even the sight of Indian soldiers there. Whether or not this is true, it is the duty of every Indian not to join such service. Those who go to Mesopotamia will be doing so merely for money. We must refuse to do this, if we do no more.

Not only can it never be our duty to rule by force over the Arabs, but we, who do not wish to remain in slavery, cannot wish to make others slaves.

Thus it behoves us not to subscribe to new loans and to refuse, from this very day, to offer ourselves as new recruits for service under the Government, especially for service which requires us to go to Mesopotamia.

In addition, it is hoped that the following things will be done from August 1 onwards:

1. Titles and honorary positions will be renounced.
2. Legislatures will be boycotted.
3. Parents will withdraw their children from Government schools.
4. Lawyers will give up practice and help people to settle their civil disputes among themselves.
5. Invitations to Government functions, parties, etc., will be politely refused, non-co-operation being given as the sole reason for doing so.

It is likely that this programme will be adopted from August 1, if the Khilafat question is not settled.

Lala Lajpat Rai<sup>1</sup> has announced non-co-operation in the form of boycott of legislatures if justice is not done in the matter of the Punjab. So we can now take it that the Punjab too has joined the Khilafat agitation. Just as on this issue Muslims should take the lead, in the matter of the Punjab the Punjabis themselves should take the lead. If they do not adopt non-co-operation, one may say that the other part of India cannot do so either.

We shall hope that Lalaji will not stop with boycott of legislatures. Until we win, we shall have to go on extending the scope of non-co-operation, and be ready to take the four steps suggested earlier. I am convinced, however, that we would win if the whole nation joins in boycotting legislatures.

Three different views on the question of boycotting legislatures have been expressed:

1. Not to start non-co-operation at all;
2. to adopt non-co-operation after election to legislatures;
3. to boycott legislatures from the very start.

The first position is entirely opposed to non-co-operation. The second alone needs to be examined. I am convinced that it will be a waste of effort to try to enter legislatures and then to refrain from attending their sessions. It is a waste of money and time alike. I do not at all see the point of doing this. What if unworthy people get elected because we do not come forward? If such people enter the legislatures, the Government will not be able to run the government of an awakened people and it will be laughed at. Moreover, if we join in the elections we shall not be able to show what real boycott can be. Our duty is so to educate public opinion—opinion of the voters—that it will be impossible for anybody to get elected to legislatures as their representatives. So long as there is lack of understanding between the king and the subjects, to attend the king's council is to strengthen his hands. A king cannot govern at all if he is not able to carry any section of his subjects with him. It follows from this that the fewer the subjects who co-operate with him, the less will be his authority. Hence, for those who accept non-co-operation, the total boycott of legislatures is the only right course. And so I hope that those who are busy trying to get elected to legislatures will give up the attempt for the present and address themselves to the more important work, that of educating public opinion on the Khilafat and the Punjab issues, and so serve the people that, when the time for entering legislatures comes, they will be better qualified in virtue of their service.

Now remain the other two suggestions which are likely to be severely criticized. The lawyers should, for the time being, give up practice and intending litigants or those who find themselves dragged into litigation should boycott the courts and get their disputes settled through arbitration boards. It is my confirmed belief that every Government masks its brute force and maintains its control over the people through civil and criminal courts, for it is cheaper, simpler and more honourable for a ruler that, instead of his controlling the people through naked force, they themselves, lured into slavery through courts, etc., submit to him of their own accord. If

people settle their civil disputes among themselves and the lawyers, unmindful of self-interest, boycott the courts in the interest of the people, the latter can advance in no time. I have believed for many years that every State tries to perpetuate its power through lawyers. Hence, though fully aware that I will be criticized for making this suggestion, I have no hesitation in putting it forward.

What is true of lawyers is true of schools. Even without such momentous issues as those of the Khilafat and the Punjab, I would certainly, if I could, see to it that the present schools were completely abandoned and would provide the right kind of education for children on whom the future of India rests. But my purpose at present in calling for a boycott of the schools is different; I want to show the Government by rendering the schools idle that, so long as justice is not done in regard to the Punjab and the Khilafat, co-operation with it is distasteful. I know that this suggestion will be visited with a good deal of ridicule. But, with the passing of time, people will realize that if they refused to crowd the Government schools, it would be impossible to run the administration. Look where we will all over the world, we shall find that the education imparted to the children is intended to facilitate smooth running of the Government. Where the Government is concerned solely with public welfare, so is the educational system; where the Government is of a mixed kind—as in India—the educational system is also calculated to confuse the intellect and is positively harmful. While making this suggestion I do not wish that the youth should be left altogether unprovided with education. Not for a moment do I wish people's education to stop. But I believe that, even when the schools have been deserted, we can look after people's education all right. I know that the suggestions I have made are quite serious and I do not expect to be able to convince readers all at once. I shall take up these subjects time and again and place my arguments before the public.

'Non-Co-operation' (G.)

*Navaajwan*, 4 July 1920

<sup>1</sup> 1865-1928, social reformer and journalist, president, Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, 1920

## 55. BLOODLESS NON-CO-OPERATION

I have most carefully read the manifesto<sup>1</sup> addressed by Sir Narayan Chandavarkar and others dissuading the people from joining the non-co-operation movement. I had expected to find some solid argument against non-co-operation, but to my great regret I have found in it nothing but distortion (no doubt unconscious) of the great religions and history. The manifesto says that 'non-co-operation is deprecated by the religious tenets and traditions of our motherland, nay, of all the religions that have saved and elevated the human race' I venture to submit that the *Bhagavad Gita* is a gospel of non-co-operation between forces of darkness and those of light. If it is to be literally interpreted, Arjuna representing a just cause was enjoined to engage in bloody warfare with the unjust Kauravas.<sup>2</sup> Tulsidas<sup>3</sup> advises the *Sant* (the good) to shun the *Asant* (the evil-doers). The *Zend-Avesta* represents a perpetual duel between Ormuzd and Ahriman, between whom there is no compromise. To say of the Bible that it taboos non-co-operation is not to know Jesus, a prince among passive resisters, who uncompromisingly challenged the might of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and for the sake of truth did not hesitate to divide sons from their parents. And what did the Prophet of Islam do? He non-co-operated in Mecca in a most active manner so long as his life was not in danger and wiped the dust of Mecca off his feet when he found that he and his followers might have uselessly to perish, and fled to Medina and returned when he was strong enough to give battle to his opponents.

The duty of non-co-operation with unjust men and kings is as strictly enjoined by all the religions as is the duty of co-operation with just men and kings. Indeed most of the scriptures of the world seem even to go beyond non-co-operation and prefer violence to effeminate submission to a wrong. The Hindu religious tradition, of which the manifesto speaks, clearly proves the duty of non-co-operation. Prahlad<sup>4</sup> dissociated himself from his father, Mirabai<sup>5</sup> from her husband, Bibhishan<sup>6</sup> from his brutal brother.

The manifesto speaking of the secular aspect says, 'The history of nations affords no instance to show that it [non-

co-operation] has, when employed, succeeded and done good.' One most recent instance of brilliant success of non-co-operation is that of General Botha who boycotted Lord Milner's reformed councils and thereby procured a perfect constitution for his country. The Dukhobours<sup>7</sup> of Russia offered non-co-operation, and a handful though they were, their grievances so deeply moved the civilized world that Canada offered them a home where they form a prosperous community. In India instances can be given by the dozen, in which in little principalities the *raiya*s<sup>8</sup> when deeply grieved by their chiefs have cut off all connection with them and bent them to their will. I know of no instance in history where well managed non-co-operation has failed.

Hitherto I have given historical instances of bloodless non-co-operation. I will not insult the intelligence of the reader by citing historical instances of non-co-operation combined with violence, but I am free to confess that there are on record as many successes as failures in violent non-co-operation. And it is because I know this fact that I have placed before the country a non-violent scheme in which, if at all worked satisfactorily, success is a certainty and in which non-response means no harm. For if even one man non-co-operates, say, by resigning some office, he has gained, not lost. That is its ethical or religious aspect. For its political result naturally it requires polymerous support. I fear therefore no disastrous result from non-co-operation save for an outbreak of violence on the part of the people whether under provocation or otherwise. I would risk violence a thousand times than risk the emasculation of a whole race.

#### 'Crusade Against Non-Co-operation'

*Young India*, 4 Aug. 1920

<sup>1</sup> Signed by Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, Gokuldas K. Parekh, Phiroze Sethna, C. V. Mehta, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, K. Natarajan, H. P. Mody, Uttumlal K. Trivedi, B. C. Dalvi, Mawji Govindji, N. M. Joshi, Kanji Dwarkadas and others and published in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 30 July 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Sons of King Dhritarashtra and cousins of the Pandavas.

<sup>3</sup> The great Hindi poet; author of *Ramacharitamansa*, a Hindi version of the *Ramayana*.

<sup>4</sup> Devotee of Vishnu, was persecuted by his disbelieving father, the demon king Hiranyakashipu. Gandhi often spoke of him as the ideal *satyagrahi*.

<sup>5</sup> A medieval saint-poetess of Rajasthan, queen of Mewar, she spent her days in devotions to Krishna, incurring her husband's displeasure

<sup>6</sup> The virtuous brother of Ravana. He tried long and hard to convert Ravana but failing in his attempts, went over to Rama before the great battle began

<sup>7</sup> 'Spirit-wrestlers', a non-conformist Russian sect which emigrated to Canada in 1898

<sup>8</sup> Tenants

## 56. NON-CO-OPERATION AND SELF-SACRIFICE

August 12, 1920

Mr. Chairman and Friends,

Like last year, I have to ask your forgiveness that I should have to speak being seated. Whilst my voice has become stronger than it was last year, my body is still weak; and if I were to attempt to speak to you standing, I could not hold on for very many minutes before the whole frame would shake. I hope, therefore, that you will grant me permission to speak seated. I have sat here to address you on a most important question, probably a question whose importance we have not measured up to now.

But before I approach that question on this dear old beach of Madras, you will expect me—you will want me to offer my tribute to the great departed, Lokamanya Tilak Maharaj. I would ask this great assembly to listen to me in silence. I have come to make an appeal to your heart and to your reason and I could not do so unless you were prepared to listen to whatever I have to say in absolute silence. I wish to offer my tribute to the departed patriot and I think that I cannot do better than say that his death, as his life, has poured new vigour into the country. If you were present as I was present at that great funeral procession, you would realize with me the meaning of my words. Mr. Tilak lived for his country. The inspiration of his life was freedom for his country which he called *swaraj*; the inspiration of his deathbed was also freedom for his country. And it was that which gave him such marvellous hold upon his countrymen; it was that which commanded the adoration not of a few chosen Indians belonging to the upper strata of society but of millions of his countrymen.

His life was one long sustained piece of self-sacrifice. He began that life of discipline and self-sacrifice in 1879 and he continued that life up to the end of his day, and that was the secret of his hold upon his country. He not only knew what he wanted for his country but also how to live for his country and how to die for his country.

I hope then that whatever I say this evening to this vast mass of people will bear fruit in that same sacrifice for which the life of Lokamanya Tilak Maharaj stands. His life, if it teaches us anything whatsoever, teaches one supreme lesson: that if we want to do anything whatsoever for our country, we can do so not by speeches, however grand, eloquent and convincing they may be, but only by sacrifice at the back of every word and at the back of every act of our life. I have come to ask every one of you whether you are ready and willing to give sufficiently for your country's sake, for your country's honour and for religion. I have boundless faith in you, the citizens of Madras, and the people of this great presidency, a faith which I began to cultivate in the year 1893 when I first made acquaintance with the Tamil labourers in South Africa, and I hope that, in these hours of our trial, this province will not be second to any other in India, and that it will lead in this spirit of self-sacrifice and will translate every word into action.

#### NEED FOR NON-CO-OPERATION

What is this non-co-operation about which you have heard much, and why do we want to offer this non-co-operation? I wish to go for the time being into the why. There are two things before this country. The first and the foremost is the Khilafat question. On this the heart of the Mussulmans of India has become lacerated. British pledges, given after the greatest deliberation by the Prime Minister of England in the name of the English nation, have been dragged into the mire. The promises given to Moslem India, on the strength of which the consideration that was accepted by the British nation was exacted, have been broken and the great religion of Islam has been placed in danger. The Mussulmans hold – and I venture to think they rightly hold – that so long as British promises remain unfulfilled so long is it impossible for them to tender



whole-hearted fealty and loyalty to the British connection; and, if it is to be a choice for a devout Mussulman between loyalty to the British connection and loyalty to his Code and Prophet, he will not require a second to make his choice and he has declared his choice. The Mussulmans say frankly, openly and honourably to the whole world that if the British ministers and the British nation do not fulfil the pledges given to them and do not wish to regard with respect the sentiments of 70 millions of the inhabitants of India who profess the faith of Islam, it will be impossible for them to retain Islamic loyalty.

It is a question, then, for the rest of the Indian population to consider whether they want to perform a neighbourly duty by their Mussulman countrymen and, if they do, they have an opportunity of a lifetime which will not occur for another hundred years, to show their goodwill, fellowship and friendship and to prove what they have been saying for all these long years that the Mussulman is the brother of the Hindu. If the Hindu regards that before the connection with the British nation comes his natural connection with his Moslem brother, then I say to you that if you find that the Moslem claim is just, that it is based upon real sentiment, and that at its background is this great religious feeling, you cannot do otherwise than help the Mussulmans through and through so long as their cause remains just and the means for attaining the end remains equally just, honourable and free from harm to India. These are the plain conditions which the Indian Mussulmans have accepted and it was when they saw that they could accept the proffered aid of the Hindus, that they could always justify the cause and the means before the whole world, that they decided to accept the proffered hand of fellowship. It is then for Hindus and Mussulmans to offer a united front to the whole of the Christian powers of Europe and tell them that weak as India is, India has still got the capacity of preserving her self-respect, she still knows how to die for her religion and for her self-respect.

That is the Khilafat in a nutshell; but you have also got the Punjab. The Punjab has wounded the heart of India as no other question has for the past century. I do not exclude from my calculation the Mutiny of 1857. Whatever hardships India

had to suffer during the Mutiny, the insult that was attempted to be offered to her during the passage of the Rowlatt legislation, and that which was offered after its passage, were unparalleled in Indian history. It is because you want justice from the British nation in connection with the Punjab atrocities, you have to devise ways and means as to how you can get this justice. The House of Commons, the House of Lords, Mr. Montagu, the Viceroy of India, every one of them knows what the feeling of India is on this Khilafat question and on that of the Punjab; the debates in both the Houses of Parliament, the action of Mr. Montagu and that of the Viceroy have demonstrated to you completely that they are not willing to give the justice which is India's due and which she demands. I suggest that our leaders have got to find a way out of this great difficulty and unless we have made ourselves even with the British rulers in India, and unless we have gained a measure of self-respect at the hands of the British rulers in India, no connection and no friendly intercourse is possible between them and ourselves. I, therefore, venture to suggest this beautiful unanswerable method of non-co-operation.

IS IT UNCONSTITUTIONAL?

I have been told that non-co-operation is unconstitutional. I venture to deny that it is unconstitutional. On the contrary, I hold that non-co-operation is a just and religious doctrine; it is the inherent right of every human being and it is perfectly constitutional. A great lover of the British Empire has said that under the British Constitution, even a successful rebellion is perfectly constitutional and he quotes historical instances which I cannot deny in support of his claim. I do not claim any constitutionality for a rebellion successful or otherwise so long as that rebellion means in the ordinary sense of the term what it does mean, namely, wresting justice by violent means. On the contrary, I have said it repeatedly to my countrymen that violence, whatever end it may serve in Europe, will never serve us in India.

My brother and friend Shaukat Ali believes in methods of violence; and if it was in his power to draw the sword against the British Empire, I know that he has got the courage of a man and he has got also the wisdom to see that he should

offer that battle to the British Empire. But because he recognizes as a true soldier that means of violence are not open to India, he sides with me accepting my humble assistance and pledges his word that so long as I am with him and so long as he believes in the doctrine so long will he not harbour even the idea of violence against any single Englishman or any single man on earth. I am here to tell you that he has been as true as his word and has kept it religiously. I am here to bear witness that he has been following out this plan of non-violent non-co-operation to the very letter and I am asking India to follow this non-violent non-co-operation. I tell you that there is not a better soldier living in our ranks in British India than Shaukat Ali. When the time for the drawing of the sword comes, if it ever comes, you will find him drawing that sword and you will find me retiring to the jungle of Hindustan

As soon as India accepts the doctrine of the sword, my life as an Indian is finished. It is because I believe in a mission special to India, and it is because I believe that the ancients of India, after centuries of experience, have found out that the true thing for any human being on earth is not justice based on violence but justice based on sacrifice of self, justice based on *yajna*<sup>1</sup> and *kurban*<sup>2</sup>. I cling to that doctrine and I shall cling to it for ever—it is for that reason I tell you that whilst my friend believes also in the doctrine of violence and has adopted the doctrine of non-violence as a weapon of the weak, I believe in the doctrine of non-violence as a weapon of the strongest. I believe that a man is the strongest soldier for daring to die unarmed with his breast bare before the enemy. So much for the non-violent part of non-co-operation. I, therefore, venture to suggest to my learned countrymen that so long as the doctrine of non-co-operation remains non-violent so long there is nothing unconstitutional in the doctrine.

I ask further, is it unconstitutional for me to say to the British Government, 'I refuse to serve you'? Is it unconstitutional for our worthy chairman to return with every respect all the titles that he has ever held from the Government? Is it unconstitutional for any parent to withdraw his children from a Government or aided school? Is it unconstitutional for a lawyer to say, 'I shall no longer support the arm of the law so long as that arm of law is used not to raise me but to debase

me'? Is it unconstitutional for a civil servant or for a judge to say, 'I refuse to serve a Government which does not wish to respect the wishes of the whole people'? I ask, is it unconstitutional for a policeman or for a soldier to tender his resignation when he knows that he is called to serve a Government which traduces its own countrymen? Is it unconstitutional for me to go to the *krishak*, to the agriculturist, and say to him, 'It is not wise for you to pay any taxes, if these taxes are used by the Government not to raise you but to weaken you'? I hold and I venture to submit that there is nothing unconstitutional in it. What is more, I have done every one of these things in my life and nobody has questioned the constitutional character of it. I was in Kaira working in the midst of seven lakhs of agriculturists. They had all suspended the payment of taxes and the whole of India was at one with me. Nobody considered that it was unconstitutional.

I submit that in the whole plan of non-co-operation there is nothing unconstitutional. But I do venture to suggest that it will be highly unconstitutional in the midst of this unconstitutional Government in the midst of a nation which has built up its magnificent constitution for the people of India to become weak and to crawl on their belly it will be highly unconstitutional for the people of India to pocket every insult that is offered to them; it is highly unconstitutional for the 70 millions of Mohammedans of India to submit to a violent wrong done to their religion; it is highly unconstitutional for the whole of India to sit still and co-operate with an unjust Government which has trodden under its feet the honour of the Punjab; I say to my countrymen 'So long as you have a sense of honour and so long as you wish to remain the descendants and defenders of the noble traditions that have been handed to you for generations after generations, it is unconstitutional for you not to non-co-operate and unconstitutional for you to co-operate with a government which has become so unjust as our Government has become.'

I am not anti-English; I am not anti-British, I am not anti-any government; but I am anti-untruth - anti-humbbug and anti-injustice. So long as the Government spells injustice, it may regard me as its enemy, implacable enemy. I had hoped at the Congress at Amritsar - I am speaking God's

truth before you – when I pleaded on knees before some of you for co-operation with the Government, I had full hope that the British ministers, who are wise as a rule, would placate the Mussulman sentiment, that they would do full justice in the matter of the Punjab atrocities, and, therefore, I said: Let us return goodwill to the hand of fellowship that has been extended to us, which, I then believed, was extended to us through the Royal Proclamation. It was on that account that I pleaded for co-operation. But today that faith having gone and been obliterated by the acts of the British ministers, I am here to plead not for futile obstruction in the legislative council but for real substantial non-co-operation which would paralyse the mightiest government on earth. That is what I stand for today.

Until we have wrung justice and until we have wrung our self-respect from unwilling hands and from unwilling pens, there can be no co-operation. Our Shastras say and I say so with the greatest deference to all the greatest religious preceptors of India but without fear of contradiction that our Shastras teach us that there shall be no co-operation between injustice and justice, between an unjust man and a justice-loving man, between truth and untruth. Co-operation is a duty only so long as Government protects your honour, and non-co-operation is an equal duty when the government, instead of protecting, robs you of your honour. That is the doctrine of non-co-operation.

#### NON-CO-OPERATION AND THE SPECIAL CONGRESS

I have been told that I should have waited for the declaration of the special Congress which is the mouthpiece of the whole nation. I know that it is the mouthpiece of the whole nation. If it was for me, individual Gandhi, to wait, I would have waited for eternity. But I had in my hands a sacred trust. I was advising my Mussulman countrymen and for the time being I hold their honour in my hands. I dare not ask them to wait for any verdict but the verdict of their own conscience. Do you suppose that Mussulmans can eat their own words, can withdraw from the honourable position they have taken up? If perchance – and God forbid that it should happen – the special congress decides against them, I would still advise my

countrymen, the Mussulmans, to stand single-handed and fight rather than yield to the attempted dishonour to their religion. It is, therefore, given to the Mussulmans to go to the Congress on bended knees and plead for support. But support or no support, it was not possible for them to wait for the Congress to give them the lead. They had to choose between futile violence, drawing of the naked sword and peaceful non-violent but effective non-co-operation, and they have made their choice.

I venture further to say to you that if there is any body of men who feel as I do, the sacred character of non-co-operation, it is for you and me not to wait for the Congress but to act and to make it impossible for the Congress to give any other verdict. After all what is the Congress? The Congress is the collected voice of individuals who form it, and if the individuals go to the Congress with a united voice, that will be the verdict you will gain from the Congress. But if we go to the Congress with no opinion because we have none or because we are afraid to express it, then naturally we await the verdict of the Congress. To those who are unable to make up their mind, I say, by all means wait. But for those who have seen the clear light as they see the lights in front of them, for them to wait is a sin. The Congress does not expect you to wait but it expects you to act so that the Congress can gauge properly the national feeling. So much for the Congress.

#### BOYCOTT OF THE COUNCILS

Among the details of non-co-operation I have placed in the foremost rank the boycott of the councils. Friends have quarrelled with me for the use of the word boycott, because I have disapproved as I disapprove even now boycott of British goods or any goods for that matter. But there, boycott has its own meaning and here boycott has its own meaning. I not only do not disapprove but approve of the boycott of the councils that are going to be formed next year. And why do I do it? The people—the masses—require from us, the leaders, a clear lead. They do not want any equivocation from us. The suggestion that we should seek election and then refuse to take the oath of allegiance would only make the nation distrust the leaders. It is not a clear lead to the nation. So I say to you,

my countrymen, not to fall into this trap. We shall sell our country by adopting the methods of seeking election and then not taking the oath of allegiance. We may find it difficult and I frankly confess to you that have not that trust in so many Indians making that declaration and standing by it. Today I suggest to those who honestly hold the view, viz. that we should seek election and then refuse to take the oath of allegiance I suggest to them that they will fall into a trap which they are preparing for themselves and for the nation. That is my view.

I hold that if we want to give the nation the clearest possible lead and if we want not to play with this great nation, we must make it clear to this nation that we cannot take any favours, no matter how great they may be, so long as those favours are accompanied by an injustice, a double wrong done to India not yet redressed. The first indispensable thing before we can receive any favours from them is, that they should redress this double wrong. There is a Greek proverb which used to say: 'Beware of the Greeks but especially beware of them when they bring gifts to you.' Today from those ministers who are bent upon perpetuating the wrong to Islam and to the Punjab, I say we cannot accept gifts but we should be doubly careful lest we may not fall into the trap that they may have devised. I therefore suggest that we must not coquet with the councils and must not have anything whatsoever to do with them. I am told that if we, who represent the national sentiment, do not seek election, the Moderates who do not represent that sentiment will. I do not agree. I do not know what the Moderates represent and I do not know what the Nationalists represent. I know that there are good sheep and black sheep among the Moderates. I know that there are good sheep and black sheep amongst the Nationalists. I know that many Moderates hold honestly the view that it is a sin to resort to non-co-operation. I respectfully agree to differ from them. I do say to them also that they will fall into a trap which they will have devised if they seek election. But that does not affect my situation.

If I feel in my heart of hearts that I ought not to go to the councils, I ought at least to abide by this decision and it does not matter if ninety-nine other countrymen seek election. That

is the only way in which public work can be done and public opinion can be built. *That is the only way in which reforms can be achieved and religion can be conserved.* If it is a question of religious honour, whether I am one or among many, I must stand upon my doctrine. Even if I should die in the attempt, it is worth dying for than that I should live and deny my own doctrine. I suggest that it will be wrong on the part of anyone to seek election to these councils. If once we feel that we cannot co-operate with this Government, we have to commence from the top. We are the natural leaders of the people and we have acquired the right and the power to go to the nation and speak to it with the voice of non-co-operation. I, therefore, do suggest that it is inconsistent with non-co-operation to seek election to the councils on any terms whatsoever.

#### LAWYERS AND NON-CO-OPERATION

I have suggested another difficult matter, viz., that the lawyers should suspend their practice. How should I do otherwise knowing so well how the Government had always been able to retain this power through the instrumentality of lawyers? It is perfectly true that it is the lawyers of today who are leading us, who are fighting the country's battles, but when it comes to a matter of action against the Government, when it comes to a matter of paralysing the activity of the Government, I know that the Government always looks to the lawyers, however fine fighters they may have been, to preserve their dignity and their self-respect. I, therefore, suggest to my lawyer friends that it is their duty to suspend their practice and to show to the Government that they will no longer retain their offices, because lawyers are considered to be honorary officers of the courts and, therefore, subject to their disciplinary jurisdiction. They must no longer retain these honorary offices if they want to withdraw co-operation from Government. But what will happen to law and order? We shall evolve law and order through the instrumentality of these very lawyers. We shall promote arbitration courts and dispense justice, pure, simple, home-made justice, *swadeshi* justice to our countrymen. That is what suspension of practice means.



## PARENTS AND NON-CO-OPERATION

I have suggested yet another difficulty- to withdraw our children from the Government schools and to ask collegiate students to withdraw from the college and to empty Government-aided schools. How could I do otherwise? I want to gauge the national sentiment. I want to know whether the Mohammedans feel deeply. If they feel deeply, they will understand in the twinkling of an eye that it is not right for them to receive schooling from a Government in which they have lost all faith; and which they do not trust at all. How can I, if I do not want to help this Government, receive any help from that Government? I think that the schools and colleges are factories for making clerks and Government servants. I would not help this great factory for manufacturing clerks and servants if I want to withdraw co-operation from that Government. Look at it from any point of view you like. It is not possible for you to send your children to the schools and still believe in the doctrine of non-co-operation

## THE DUTY OF TITLE-HOLDERS

I have gone further. I have suggested that our title-holders should give up their titles. How can they hold on to the titles and honours bestowed by this Government? They were at one time badges of honour when we believed that national honour was safe in their hands. But now they are no longer badges of honour but badges of dishonour and disgrace when we really believe that we cannot get justice from this Government. Every title-holder holds his title and honours as trustee for the nation, and in this first step in the withdrawal of co-operation from the Government, they should surrender their titles without a moment's consideration. I suggest to my Mohammedan countrymen that, if they fail in this primary duty, they will certainly fail in non-co-operation unless the masses themselves reject the classes and take up non-co-operation in their own hands and are able to fight that battle even as the men of the French Revolution were able to take the reins of Government in their own hands, leaving aside the leaders, and marched to the banner of victory.

I want no revolution. I want ordered progress. I want no

disordered order. I want no chaos. I want real order to be evolved out of this chaos which is misrepresented to me as order. If it is order established by a tyrant in order to get hold of the tyrannical reins of Government, I say that it is no order for me but it is disorder. I want to evolve justice out of this injustice. Therefore, I suggest to you the passive non-co-operation. If we would only realize the secret of this peaceful and infallible doctrine, you will know and you will find that you will not want to use even an angry word when they lift the sword at you and you will not want even to lift your little finger, let alone a stick or a sword.

#### A SERVICE TO THE EMPIRE

You may consider that I have spoken these words, in anger because I have considered the ways of this Government immoral, unjust, debasing and untruthful. I use these adjectives with the greatest deliberation. I have used them for my own true brother with whom I was engaged in a battle of non-co-operation for full 13 years, and although the ashes cover the remains of my brother, I tell you that I used to tell him that he was unjust when his plans were based upon immoral foundation. I used to tell him that he did not stand for truth. There was no anger in me. I told him this home truth because I loved him. In the same manner I tell the British people that I love them and that I want their association but I want that association on conditions well defined. I want my self-respect and I want my absolute equality with them. If I cannot gain that equality from the British people, I do not want the British connection. If I have to let the British people go and import temporary disorder and dislocation of national business, I will rather favour that disorder and dislocation than that I should have injustice from the hands of a great nation such as the British nation.

You will find that by the time the whole chapter is closed that the successors of Mr. Montagu will give me the credit for having rendered the most distinguished service that I have yet rendered to the Empire, in having offered this non-co-operation and in having suggested the boycott, not of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, but of boycott of a visit engineered by the Government in order to tighten its hold on the

national neck. I will not allow it even if I stand alone, if I cannot persuade this nation not to welcome that visit, but will boycott that visit with all the power at my command. It is for that reason I stand before you and implore you to offer this religious battle, but it is not a battle offered to you by a visionary or a saint.

I deny being a visionary. I do not accept the claim of saintliness. I am of the earth, earthly, a common gardener man as much as any one of you, probably much more than you are. I am prone to as many weaknesses as you are. But I have seen the world. I have lived in the world with my eyes open. I have gone through the most fiery ordeals that have fallen to the lot of man. I have gone through this discipline. I have understood the secret of my own sacred Hinduism. I have learnt the lesson that non-co-operation is the duty not merely of the saint but it is the duty of every ordinary citizen, who not knowing much, not caring to know much, but wants to perform his ordinary household functions. The people of Europe teach even their masses, the poor people, the doctrine of the sword. But the *rishis* of India, those who have held the traditions of India, have preached to the masses of India the doctrine, not of the sword, not of violence but of suffering, of self-suffering. And unless you and I are prepared to go through the primary lesson, we are not ready even to offer the sword and that is the lesson my brother Shaukat Ali has imbibed to teach and that is why he today accepts my advice tendered to him in all prayerfulness and in all humility and says: 'Long live non-co-operation.'

Please remember that even in England the little children were withdrawn from the schools; and colleges in Cambridge and Oxford were closed. Lawyers had left their desks and were fighting in the trenches. I do not present to you the trenches but I do ask you to go through the sacrifice that the men, women and the brave lads of England went through. Remember that you are offering battle to a nation which is saturated with the spirit of sacrifice whenever the occasion arises. Remember that the little band of Boers offered stubborn resistance to a mighty nation. But their lawyers had left their desks. Their mothers had withdrawn their children from the schools and colleges and the children had become the volun-

teers of the nation. I have seen them with these naked eyes of mine.

I am asking my countrymen in India to follow no other gospel than the gospel of self-sacrifice which precedes every battle. Whether you belong to the school of violence or non-violence, you will still have to go through the fire of sacrifice and of discipline. May God grant you, may God grant our leaders the wisdom, the courage and the true knowledge to lead the nation to its cherished goal! May God grant the people of India the right path, the true vision and the ability and the courage to follow this path, difficult and yet easy, of sacrifice.

Speech on Non-Co-operation, Madras

*The Hindu*, 13 Aug. 1920

SWMG, third edition, pp 524 541

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> Sacrifice

## 57 AHIMSĀ RELIGION, AND NON-CO-OPERATION

It is not without the greatest reluctance that I engage in a controversy with so learned a leader like Sir Narayan Chandavarkar. But in view of the fact that I am the author of the movement of non-co-operation, it becomes my painful duty to state my views even though they are opposed to those of the leaders whom I look upon with respect. I have just read during my travels in Malabar Sir Narayan's rejoinder to my answer to the Bombay Manifesto against non-co-operation. I regret to have to say that the rejoinder leaves me unconvinced. He and I seem to read the teachings of the Bible, the *Gita* and the Koran from different standpoints or we put different interpretations on them. We seem to understand the words *ahimsa*, politics and religion differently. I shall try my best to make clear my meaning of the common terms and my reading of the different religions.

At the outset let me assure Sir Narayan that I have not changed my views on *ahimsa*. I still believe that man not having been given the power of creation does not possess the

right of destroying the meanest creature that lives. The prerogative of destruction belongs solely to the Creator of all that lives. I accept the interpretation of *ahimsa*, namely, that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence on the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsa*, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically. Thus if my son lives a life of shame, I may not help him to do so by continuing to support him; on the contrary, my love for him requires me to withdraw all support from him although it may mean even his death. And the same love imposes on me the obligation of welcoming him to my bosom when he repents. But I may not by physical force compel my son to become good that in my opinion is the moral of the story of the Prodigal Son.

Non-co-operation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state more active than physical resistance or violence. Passive resistance is a misnomer. Non-co-operation in the sense used by me must be non-violent and therefore neither punitive nor vindictive nor based on malice, ill will or hatred. It follows therefore that it would be sin for me to serve General Dyer and co-operate with him to shoot innocent men. But it will be an exercise of forgiveness or love for me to nurse him back to life, if he was suffering from a physical malady. I cannot use in this context the word co-operation as Sir Narayan would perhaps use it. I would co-operate a thousand times with this Government to wnan it from its career of crime, but I will not for a single moment co-operate with it to continue that career. And I would be guilty of wrongdoing if I retained a title from it or 'as service under it or supported its law-courts or schools'. Better for me a beggar's bowl than the richest possession from hands stained with the blood of the innocents of Jallianwala. Better by far a warrant of imprisonment than honeyed words from those who have wantonly wounded the religious sentiment of my seventy million brothers.

My reading of the *Gita* is diametrically opposed to Sir Narayan's. I do not believe that the *Gita* teaches violence for

doing good. It is pre-eminently a description of the duel that goes on in our own hearts. The divine author has used a historical incident for inculcating the lesson of doing one's duty even at the peril of one's life. It inculcates performance of duty irrespective of the consequences, for, we mortals, limited by our physical frames, are incapable of controlling actions save our own. The *Gita* distinguishes between the powers of light and darkness and demonstrates their incompatibility.

Jesus, in my humble opinion, was a prince among politicians. He did render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's. He gave the devil his due. He ever shunned him and is reported never once to have yielded to his incantations. The politics of his time consisted in securing the welfare of the people by teaching them not to be seduced by the trinkets of the priests and the Pharisees. The latter then controlled and moulded the life of the people. Today the system of Government is so devised as to affect every department of our life. It threatens our very existence. If therefore we want to conserve the welfare of the nation, we must religiously interest ourselves in the doings of the governors and exert a moral influence on them by insisting on their obeying the laws of morality. General Dyer did produce a 'moral effect' by an act of butchery. Those who are engaged in forwarding the movement of non-co-operation hope to produce a moral effect by a process of self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-purification. It surprises me that Sir Narayan should speak of General Dyer's massacre in the same breath as acts of non-co-operation. I have done my best to understand his meaning, but I am sorry to confess that I have failed.

'Religious Authority for Non-Co-operation'

*Young India*, 25 Aug. 1920

## 58 DISCIPLINE AND DISORDER

Looking at the surface there is but a thin dividing line between mob-law and the people's law. And yet the division is complete and will persist for all time.

India is today quickly passing through the mob-law stage.

The use of the adverb signifies my hope. It may be our misfortune to have to pass through that process even in slow stages. But it is wisdom to adopt every means at our disposal to have done with that stage as quickly as possible.

There is much tendency on our part to yield to the rule of the mob. There was mob rule at Amritsar on the 10th April 1919. There was mob rule at Ahmedabad on the same fateful day. It represented undisciplined destruction and therefore it was thoughtless, profitless, wicked and harmful. War is disciplined destruction, much more bloody than any yet committed by mobs. And yet war has been apostrophized, because we have been deceived by the temporary but brilliant results achieved by some wars. So, if India has to achieve her freedom by violence, it will have to be by disciplined and honourable (insofar as it is possible to associate honour with violence) violence, named war. It will then be an act not of mobocracy but democracy.

But my purpose today is not to write of mobocracy of the Ahmedabad type. I intend to deal with the type with which I am more familiar. The Congress is a demonstration for the mob and in that sense and that only. Though organized by thoughtful men and women it may be called a mob-demonstration. Our popular demonstrations are unquestionably mob-demonstrations. During the memorable tour of the Khilafat mission through the Punjab, Sind and Madras, I have had a surfeit of such demonstrations. I have been ashamed to witness at railway stations thoughtless though unwitting destruction of passengers' luggage by demonstrators who in their adoration of their heroes have ignored everything else and everybody else. They have made, much to the discomfort of their heroes, unmusical and harsh noises. They have trampled upon one another. They have elbowed out one another. All have shouted, all at the same time, in the holy name of order and peace. Ten volunteers have been heard to give the same order at the same time.

Volunteers often become demonstrators instead of remaining people's policemen. It is a task often dangerous, always uncomfortable, for the heroes to be escorted through a broken chain of volunteers from the platform to the coach intended for them. Often it is a process which, although it should oc-

cupy no more than five minutes, has occupied one hour. The crowd instead of pressing back, presses towards the heroes and who therefore require to be protected. The coach is taken possession of by anybody who dares, volunteers being the greatest sinners. The heroes and other lawful occupants have to reason with the intruders that they may not mount the footboards in that summary fashion. The hood of the coach is roughly handled by the processionists. It is not often that I have seen hoods of motors left undamaged by crowds. On the route instead of crowds lining the streets, they follow the coach. The result is confusion worse confounded.

Every moment there is danger of accidents. That there is rarely any accident at such demonstrations is not due to the skill of the organizers, but the crowd is determined to put up with all jostling and retain its perfect good humour. In spite of everyone jostling everyone else, one has not the slightest *wish* to inconvenience one's neighbour. To finish the picture, there is the meeting, an ever-growing cause of anxiety. You face nothing but disorder, din, pressing, yelling and shouting there. A good speaker arrests the attention of the audience and there is order such that you can hear a pin drop.

All the same this is mobocracy. You are at the mercy of the mob. So long as there is sympathy between you and the mob, everything goes well. Immediately that cord is broken, there is horror. An Ahmedabad episode now and then gives you the mob psychology.

We must then evolve order out of chaos. And I have no doubt that the best and the speediest method is to introduce the people's law instead of mob-law.

One great stumbling block is that we have neglected music. Music means rhythm, order. Its effect is electrical. It immediately soothes. I have seen, in European countries, a resourceful superintendent of police by starting a popular song controlling the mischievous tendencies of mobs.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately like our Shastras, music has been the prerogative of the few, either the barter of prostitutes or high class religious devotees. It has never become nationalized in the modern sense. If I had any influence with volunteer boy scouts and Seva Samiti organizations, I would make compulsory a proper singing in company of national songs. And to that end I should have



great musicians attending every Congress or Conference and teaching mass music.

Much greater discipline, method and knowledge must be exacted from volunteers and no chance comer should be accepted as a full-fledged volunteer. He only hinders rather than helping. Imagine the consequence of the introduction of one untrained soldier finding his way into an army at war. He can disorganize it in a second. My greatest anxiety about non-co-operation is not the slow response of the leaders, certainly not the well-meant and even ill-meant criticism, never unadulterated repression. The movement will overcome these obstacles. It will gain even strength from them. But the greatest obstacle is that we have not yet emerged from the mobocratic stage. But my consolation lies in the fact that nothing is so easy as to train mobs, for the simple reason that they have no mind, no premeditation. They act in a frenzy. They repent quickly. Our organized Government does not repent of its fiendish crimes at Jallianwala, Lahore, Kasur, Akalgarh, Ram Nagar, etc. But I have drawn tears from repentant mobs at Gujranwala and everywhere a frank acknowledgement of repentance from those who formed the mob during that eventful month of April. Non-co-operation I am therefore now using in order to evolve democracy. And I respectfully invite all the doubting leaders to help by refusing to condemn, in anticipation of a process of national purification, training and sacrifice.

Next week I hope to give some illustrations of how in a moment order was evolved out of mob disorder. My faith in the people is boundless. Their is an amazingly responsive nature. Let not the leaders distrust them. This chorus of condemnation of non-co-operation when properly analysed means nothing less than distrust of the people's ability to control themselves. For the present I conclude this somewhat lengthy article by suggesting some rules for guidance and immediate execution.

1. There should be no raw volunteers accepted for big demonstrations. Therefore none but the most experienced should be at the head.

2. Volunteers should have a general instructions book on their persons.

3. At the time of demonstrations there must be a review of volunteers at which special instructions should be given.

4. At stations, volunteers should not all be centred at one point, namely, where the reception committee should be. But they should be posted at different points in the crowd

5. Large crowds should never enter the station. They cannot but inconvenience traffic. There is as much honour in staying out as in entering the station.

6. The first duty of the volunteers should be to see that other passengers' luggage is not trampled upon.

7. Demonstrators ought not to enter the station long before the notified time for arrival.

8. There should be a clear passage left in front of the train for the passengers.

9. There should be another passage if possible half way through the demonstrators for the heroes to pass.

10. There should be no chain formed. It is humiliating

11. The demonstrators must not move till the heroes have reached their coach or till they receive a pre-arranged signal from an authorized volunteer.

12. National cries must be fixed and must be raised not anyhow, at any time or all the time, but just on the arrival of the train, on the heroes reaching the coach and on the route at fair intervals. No objections need be raised to this on the score of the demonstration becoming mechanical and not spontaneous. The spontaneity will depend upon numbers, the response to the cries above all the general look of the demonstrators, not in the greatest number of noises or the loudest. It is the training that a nation receives which characterizes the nature of its demonstrations. A Mohammedan silently worshipping in his mosque is no less demonstrative than a Hindu temple-goer making a noise either through his voice or his gong or both.

13. On the route the crowd must line and not follow the carriages. If pedestrians form part of the moving procession, they must noiselessly and in an orderly manner take their places and not at their own will join or abstain.

14. A crowd should never press towards the heroes but should move away from them.

15. Those on the last line or the circumference should never

press forward but give way when pressure is directed towards them.

16. If there are women in the crowd they should be specially protected

17. Little children should never be brought out in the midst of crowds.

18. At meetings volunteers should be dispersed among the crowd. They should learn flag and whistle signalling in order to pass instructions from one to another when it is impossible for the voice to carry.

19. It is no part of the audience to preserve order. They do so by keeping motionless and silent.

20. Above all, everyone should obey volunteers' instructions without question.

This list does not pretend to be exhaustive. It is merely illustrative and designed to stimulate thought and discussion. I hope that all the vernacular papers will translate this article.

#### 'Democracy Versus Mobocracy'

*Young India*, 8 Sept. 1920

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Alexander, who saved Gandhi in this manner from an attack by the mob in South Africa

#### 59. MIXED MOTIVES IN A JUST CAUSE

There is an extract from the letter of an English friend. It is a pleasure to me to receive letters from English friends. I know that there are many honest Englishmen who are following the movement of non-co-operation with sympathetic attention, and would gladly help if they are clear about the moralities of non-co-operation. The letter is a typical instance.

I understand that you are striving to establish *swaraj* in India by appealing to moral force to attain which you rely upon selflessness. Permit me to observe that the idea is simply *excellent*. But, is there no fear that the means— non-co-operation— which you are adopting will fail you in the end, if applied before *every* unit acts from a purely

selfless motive? When moral success is aimed at, surely the means *must* be of the same trend?

I also earnestly look forward to the day when, not only India, but also the whole race of man will enjoy *swaraj* on the following lines

The human species exists at the junction of the animal and the moral kingdoms of creation, blessed with free will by the Creator wherewith to adjudicate between the demands of a material frame (the human animal body) and a moral form (character), and thereby to express the image of the first Great Cause in finite form (in the latter). When every unit of the species learns to appreciate moral values in *every* thought, word and deed, by always giving preference to moral demands because they hail from a higher Kingdom of creation, and to do otherwise will be to defy Omnipotence, selflessness must obviously follow. The results will be that every human being will love the other automatically and true *swaraj* knit the whole family together.

Does it not seem likely, on the other hand, that to begin with non-co-operation will lead to the subordination of your moral goal to ulterior and inferior material desires, and therefore even if you do succeed that you will have lost the very cream of your efforts unintentionally, by making fellow men greater animals than they already are? The co-operation of selfless representatives of a selfless nation will sooner make a selfless government than non-co-operation of a nation which strives to follow a selfless leader before waiting *first* to learn how to conquer self!

Kindly pause to consider these facts: whatever you do should be for the good of the whole brotherhood of man, and moral values must *on no account* take a second place, even in an ostensibly trivial instance, otherwise the cure may be worse than the disease.

I have given the letter in full omitting an introductory sentence. I have refrained from publishing the name because I am not sure of the writer's intention regarding the publication of his name. His moral difficulty is entitled to careful consideration. In my opinion there is confusion of thought in this statement of the case. It ever has been my purpose to show that dishonourable means cannot bring about an honourable end. What the writer may challenge and in fact does challenge is the motive of the non-co-operators in general. I confess that the motive of all non-co-operators is not love but a meaningless hatred. I call it meaningless, for the hatred of so many of the non-co-operators has no meaning in the plan

of non-co-operation. A man does not sacrifice himself out of hatred. He helplessly tries to inflict an injury on his supposed enemy.

In non-co-operation the result to be achieved is not infliction of punishment but the attainment of justice. The end of hatred is never justice: it is retaliation: it is blind fury. The hatred of the mob at Amritsar resulted in the cruel murder of innocent men. But the hatred of a non-co-operator turning upon himself loses its points, purifies him, and makes it possible for the object of his hatred to reform and retrace his steps. Thus a non-co-operator starting as an enemy ends by becoming a friend. What does it matter with what motive a man does the right thing. A right act is right whether done for policy or for its own sake. I recognize the danger of a thing done from policy being abandoned, if it does not produce the desired result. But the existence of such danger is not an argument against the morality of the act itself.

The writer has suggested an impossible solution. He wants non-co-operators to be perfect beings. But he forgets that if we were perfect there would be no occasion for non-co-operation. For there would have been non-co-operation with evil. Non-co-operation is an attempt to purify or perfect oneself. And the majority follow the path of purification from faith, not from knowledge. In other words selfish non-co-operationists following a selfless leader will have done well at the end, for they will realize the virtue of non-co-operation as a doctrine of selflessness.

The difficulty of Englishmen lies really in believing that their rule is wholly an evil for India, i.e., it has made India the worse for English rule in everything that counts. India is poorer in wealth, in manliness, in godliness and in her sons' power to defend themselves. It is sinful to coquet with evil. There is no meeting ground between good and evil—God and Satan. The writer asks me to pause and consider. I have done so for thirty years and have been driven to the final conclusion that English Rule in its present form has proved a curse to India. Let Englishmen pause and consider what is happening before their eyes. Let them turn the searchlight inward. May they ask me to co-operate with a Government that has betrayed the Mussulmans of India and stabbed humanity in the

Punjab? Let them not call the massacre of Jallianwala an error of judgement. Let them not believe the Prime Minister if and when he says that he has not committed a breach of the solemn promise given to the Mussulmans of India. The cause is just: the means are equally just. The motive is mixed. The struggle is being prolonged only because the motive is not as unmixed as the means and the end.

‘Moral Values’

*Young India*, 5 Jan. 1921

#### 60. NON-CO-OPERATION AND HUMILITY

The spirit of non-violence necessarily leads to humility. Non-violence means reliance on God, the Rock of ages. If we would seek His aid, we must approach Him with a humble and a contrite heart. Non-co-operationists may not trade upon their amazing success at the Congress.<sup>1</sup> We must act, even as the mango tree which droops as it bears fruit. Its grandeur lies in its majestic lowliness. But one hears of non-co-operationists being insolent and intolerant in their behaviour towards those who differ from them. I know that they will lose all their majesty and glory if they betray any inflation. Whilst we may not be dissatisfied with the progress made so far, we have little to our credit to make us feel proud. We have to sacrifice much more than we have done to justify pride, much less elation. Thousands who flocked to the Congress *pandal* have undoubtedly given their intellectual assent to the doctrine but few have followed it out in practice. Leaving aside the pleaders, how many parents have withdrawn their children from schools? How many of those who registered their vote in favour of non-co-operation have taken to hand-spinning or discarded the use of all foreign cloth?

Non-co-operation is not a movement of brag, bluster, or bluff. It is a test of our sincerity. It requires solid and silent self-sacrifice. It challenges our honesty and our capacity for national work. It is a movement that aims at translating ideas into action. And the more we do, the more we find that much

more must be done than we had expected. And this thought of our imperfection must make us humble

A non-co-operationist strives to compel attention and to set an example not by his violence but by his unobtrusive humility. He allows his solid action to speak for his creed. His strength lies in his reliance upon the correctness of his position. And the conviction of it grows most in his opponent when he least interposes his speech between his action and his opponent. Speech, especially when it is haughty, betrays want of confidence and it makes one's opponent sceptical about the reality of the act itself. Humility therefore is the key to quick success. I hope that every non-co-operationist will recognize the necessity of being humble and self-restrained. It is because so little is really required to be done and because all of that little depends entirely upon ourselves that I have ventured the belief that *swaraj* is attainable in less than one year.

'The Need for Humility'

*Young India*, 12 Jan. 1921

<sup>1</sup> At the Nagpur session, in December 1920

## 61. ENLIGHTENED NON-CO-OPERATION AND I

Dear Mr Gandhi,

Mr. Lyle<sup>1</sup> has been here and he told me that you had been enquiring kindly about me. I thank you for your kind inquiries. Of course I have been following your activities with the greatest interest, but it grieves me to have to say that I do not and cannot approve of your non-co-operation movement. I have been praying that God may show you your mistake and that He may use you and us all— for the glory of His Holy Name and for the real enduring welfare of the whole of India. From your many articles and speeches I have gathered that you attempt to justify your movement on the ground that if, in spite of argument and dissuasion, one's nearest and dearest even be seen pursuing a wrong course of action, one is bound to dissociate oneself from him or her lest one be charged with being an accomplice in the wrongdoing.

But surely, one fundamental doctrine of both the Christian and

Hindu Scriptures points to quite a different course of conduct. Both tell us of Divine Incarnations, and though these differ in some respects, yet in each case the underlying idea is that when God, who is Himself infinitely holy, saw the sin-begotten misery of men, He did not hold aloof from them but graciously stooped down and came to them to render help and to save their sin and its effects. Jesus Christ, the Holy and Undeiled One, did not refuse to work along with sinful men, but, on the contrary, while loathing all evil and scathingly denouncing it even in the great ones of his time, He freely and closely associated with all men, from the Pharisee down to the hated tax-gatherer of an alien government and the notorious sinner; and endeavoured, both by wise precept and loving example, to wean them from their wickedness and to win them to righteousness.

From this I gather that it is the obvious duty of all true patriots at the present time not to hold themselves aloof from a Government unfairly denounced as 'devilish' and 'Satanic', but to take every possible step, e.g., the encouraging of the new Councils, to keep in touch with it and endeavour to bring it round to what they consider a more righteous course of conduct. I am hoping and praying that as you were led to acknowledge your mistake of last year in the matter of *satyagraha*, so God may open your eyes before it is too late and lead you from non-co-operation to co-operation.

You are at liberty to use these few words in any way you like. With kind regards,

I am,  
Yours sincerely,  
G GILLESPIE

Rajkot,  
20-11-20

I print this letter without a word of alteration. I print it specially because it shows that in spite of ceaseless denunciation by me of the existing system of Government, I have the good fortune to retain the warm friendship of Britishers like the Rev. Gillespie. I know that he honestly believes what he says. He gives me credit for honesty of belief and purpose, yet we differ as poles asunder even in our interpretation of the Christian and Hindu scriptures. Of the latter I can write with confidence, and I make bold to assert that it is the *duty* of a Hindu to dissociate himself from the evil-doer, i.e., to refrain from participating in or countenancing the evil in him. Prah-



lad dissociated himself from the evil done by his father. The divine Sita rejected the services tendered to her by Ravan. Bharat denounced the deeds of Kaikeyi, his mother, and rejected the throne wickedly secured for him by her.

I can write of the Bible only with diffidence. But my reading of it has clearly confirmed the opinion derived from a reading of the Hindu scriptures. Jesus mixed with the publicans and the sinners neither as a dependent nor as a patron. He mixed with them to serve and to convert them to a life of truthfulness and purity. But he wiped the dust off his feet of those places which did not listen to his word. I hold it to be my duty not to countenance a son who disgraces himself by a life of shame and vice. *Enlightened non-co-operation is the expression of anguished love.* My esteemed correspondent mixes up dissociation from evil with dissociation from persons for service. Would Jesus have accepted gifts from the money-changers, taken from them scholarships for his friends, and advanced loans to them to ply their nefarious traffic? Was His denunciation of hypocrites, Pharisees, and seducers merely in word? Or did He not actually invite the people to beware of them and shun them? But Mr. Gillespie thinks that I unfairly describe the Government to be Satanic. Perhaps that alters our viewpoints.

I consider that I would be less than truthful if I did not describe as Satanic a Government which has been guilty of fraud, murder, and wanton cruelty: which still remains unrepentant and resorts to untruth to cover its guilt. I really believe I am performing the office of a friend by denouncing in precise language the pretensions of a Government which has nothing to commend itself to the people under its charge.

‘Did Jesus Co-operate.’

*Young India*, 19 Jan. 1921

<sup>1</sup> A Christian missionary at Ahmedabad who used to teach English to the students in Sabarmati Ashram

## 62. NON-CO-OPERATION AND NEGATION

‘The Poet of Asia, as Lord Hardinge called Dr. Tagore, is fast becoming, if he has not already become, the Poet of the world.

Increasing prestige has brought to him increasing responsibility. His greatest service to India must be his poetic interpretation of India's message to the world. The Poet is therefore sincerely anxious that India should deliver no false or feeble message in her name. He is naturally jealous of his country's reputation. He says he has striven hard to find himself in tune with the present movement. He confesses that he is baffled. He can find nothing for his lyre in the din and the bustle of non-co-operation. In three forceful letters he has endeavoured to give expression to his misgivings, and he has come to the conclusion that non-co-operation is not dignified enough for the India of his vision, that it is a doctrine of negation and despair. He fears that it is a doctrine of separation, exclusiveness, narrowness and negation.

No Indian can feel anything but pride in the Poet's exquisite jealousy of India's honour. It is good that he should have sent to us his misgivings in language at once beautiful and clear.

In all humility I shall endeavour to answer the Poet's doubts. I may fail to convince him or the reader who may have been touched by his eloquence, but I would like to assure him and India that non-co-operation in conception is not any of the things he fears, and he need have no cause to be ashamed of his country for having adopted non-co-operation. If in actual application it appears in the end to have failed, it will be no more the fault of the doctrine than it would be of Truth if those who claim to apply it in practice do not appear to succeed. Non-co-operation may have come in advance of its time. India and the world must then wait, but there is no choice for India save between violence and non-co-operation.

Nor need the Poet fear that non-co-operation is intended to erect a Chinese Wall between India and the West. On the contrary, non-co-operation is intended to pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary co-operation based on mutual respect and trust. The present struggle is being waged against compulsory co-operation, against one-sided combination, against the armed imposition of modern methods of exploitation masquerading under the name of civilization.

Non-co-operation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil.

The Poet's concern is largely about the students. He is of opinion that they should not have been called upon to give up Government schools before they had other schools to go to. Here I must differ from him. I have never been able to make a fetish of literary training. My experience has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and that character-building is independent of literary training. I am firmly of opinion that the Government schools have unmanned us, rendered us helpless and godless. They have filled us with discontent, and, providing no remedy for the discontent, have made us despondent. They have made us what we were intended to become—clerks and interpreters. A Government builds its prestige upon the apparently voluntary association of the governed. And if it was wrong to co-operate with the Government in keeping us slaves, we were bound to begin with those institutions in which our association appeared to be most voluntary. The youth of a nation are its hope. I hold that as soon as we discovered that the system of government was wholly, or mainly, evil, it became sinful for us to associate our children with it.

It is no argument against the soundness of the proposition laid down by me, that the vast majority of the students went back after the first flush of enthusiasm. Their recantation is proof rather of the extent of our degradation than of the wrongness of the step. Experience has shown that the establishment of national schools has not resulted in drawing many more students. The strongest and the truest of them came out without any national schools to fall back upon, and I am convinced that these first withdrawals are rendering service of the highest order.

But the Poet's protest against the calling out of the boys is really a corollary to his objection to the very doctrine of non-co-operation. He has a horror of everything negative. His whole soul seems to rebel against the negative commandments of religion. I must give his objection in his own inimitable language. 'R. in support of the present movement has often said to me that passion for rejection is a stronger power in the beginning than the acceptance of an ideal. Though I know it to be a fact, I cannot take it as a truth. . . . *Brahmavidya* in India has for its object *mukti*, emancipation, while Buddhism

has *nirvana*, extinction. *Mukti* draws our attention to the positive and *nirvana* to the negative side of truth. Therefore, he emphasized the fact of *dukha*, misery which had to be avoided, and the *brahmanidya* emphasized the fact of *ananda*, joy which had to be attained.' In these and kindred passages the reader will find the key to the Poet's mentality. In my humble opinion, rejection is as much an ideal as the acceptance of a thing. It is as necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth.

All religions teach that two opposite forces act upon us and that the human endeavour consists in a series of eternal rejections and acceptances. Non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good. I venture to suggest that the Poet has done an unconscious injustice to Buddhism in describing *nirvana* as merely a negative state. I make bold to say that *mukti*, emancipation, is as much a negative state as *nirvana*. Emancipation from or extinction of the bondage of the flesh leads to *ananda* (eternal bliss). Let me close this part of my argument by drawing attention to the fact that the final word of the Upanishads (*brahmanidya*) is *Not*. *Neti* was the best description the authors of the Upanishads were able to find for *Brahman*.

I therefore think that the Poet has been unnecessarily alarmed at the negative aspect of non-co-operation. We had lost the power of saying 'no'. It had become disloyal, almost sacrilegious, to say 'no' to the Government. This deliberate refusal to co-operate is like the necessary weeding process that a cultivator has to resort to before he sows. Weeding is as necessary to agriculture as sowing. Indeed, even whilst the crops are growing, the weeding fork, as every husbandman knows, is an instrument almost of daily use. The nation's non-co-operation is an invitation to the Government to co-operate with it on its own terms as is every nation's right and every good government's duty.

Non-co-operation is the nation's notice that it is no longer satisfied to be in tutelage. The nation has taken to the harmless, natural and religious doctrine of non-co-operation in the place of the unnatural and irreligious doctrine of violence. And if India is ever to attain the *swaraj* of the Poet's dream, she will do so only by non-violent non-co-operation. Let him

deliver his message of peace to the world, and feel confident that India through her non-co-operation, if she remain true to her pledge, will have exemplified his message. Non-co-operation is intended to give the very meaning to patriotism that the Poet is yearning after. An India prostrate at the feet of Europe can give no hope to humanity. An India awakened and free has a message of peace and goodwill to a groaning world. Non-co-operation is designed to supply her with a platform from which she will preach the message.

'The Poet's Anxiety'

*Young India*, 1 June 1921

### 63. NON-CO-OPERATION, RESENTMENT, AND LOVE

The three-fold suffering, water of love alone can cool.

TULSIDAS

In big institutions, they have a special key which fits the locks on all doors. The key for each room opens that room and no other; but one officer has a key which fits all locks. In English, they call this latter 'the master key'. I have used its equivalent in Gujarati, *vadi chavi*, as the title of this article.

Through the boycott programmes, people are expected to keep away from legislatures, students from schools and colleges and litigants from law-courts. If these three classes of people are not sufficiently influenced by our appeals, doubts about the success of these programmes arise.

But love is the master key in these cases and the sovereign remedy.

Non-co-operation without love is Satanic; non-co-operation with love is godly. It was out of love that the Prophet carried on non-co-operation with the Arabs of Mecca for full 13 years. He opened their eyes with his love. It was certainly not hatred which impelled Mira to non-co-operate with Kumbha Rana. She lovingly submitted to the punishment which the Rana inflicted on her. Our non-co-operation also springs from love. Without it, everything is hollow. Love is not merely the master

key, it is the only key. If those who have left Government schools hate the others who have not, then sacrifice is lifeless and dry. Our boycott of councils will have no meaning if we cherish ill-feeling for those who get elected to them. To try to win over with love those who differ from us is the way of *dharma*, to get angry with them is the Satanic way—the atheist's way.

Be it admitted to our shame and disgrace that our sacrifice has been vitiated, in some measure, by anger, ill will and similar feelings and this is why it has not shone to the best effect, nor yielded results. If all those who joined the boycott had borne no ill will to those who did not join, our position today would have been extremely good; we would have been about to win *swamy*.

So our foremost duty is to shower love on people. Doing this does not mean becoming one of them. That would be unthinking love. It would mean our being a party to what they do. That is real love through which we love even our opponents, decline to look upon them as fools and serve them. It is nothing to wonder at if one Hindu loves another Hindu; a Hindu's goodness lies in loving a Muslim equally well and respecting his manners and customs. Is there anything extraordinary in a person who co-operates with the Government being on good terms with another such person? Real strength and humility in a non-co-operator lie in loving an advocate of co-operation and being patient with him despite acute differences with him. We show no dignity in running down such a person, pouring contempt on him and hooting at him. Dignity lies in going barefoot to his house and being of service to him.

We have not properly attended to this part of our duty. Though I have been writing about it, I am sorry that I have not stressed the point as well as I should. The experience in Bombay has opened my eyes. It has brought home to me the shallowness of my tolerance. If every time I had strongly condemned verbal attacks on those co-operating with the Government, we would have advanced much further by now. If, every time a cap was snatched away, I had expressed my strongest disapproval of the action, things would have been much better today than they are. I know that, for a man who

has the privilege of being the leader of such a great fight, it is a heinous sin not to exercise the utmost vigilance. If the general in this battle is much too weak or mild or feels himself helpless, he had better give up his leadership.

Now that we have realized our error, let us not be guilty of it again.

We should now banish from our minds all resentment against those who co-operate, against Parsis, Christians and Englishmen. Let us regard them too as our brothers and stop ostracizing them. We should not interrupt their water-supply or prevent barbers from serving them. We should see that their needs have been provided before we think of ours and should take pleasure in serving them. If, and only if, we understand this law which all religions teach, we shall get *swaraj* easily enough and soon. At every place, therefore, where preparations are afoot for starting civil disobedience, the first thing we should do is to meet every person who co-operates with the Government and demonstrate our friendly regard for him in spite of our differences with him.

'Master Key' (G)  
*Navajwan*, 4 Dec. 1921

#### 64. NON-CO-OPERATION AND CIVILITY

Aso Vad 3

Wednesday, [15 October 1924]

It may be said that non-co-operation will be suspended at the forthcoming Congress session. However, this does not imply that non-co-operators will suspend work. In fact, what was only an illusion of non-co-operation will be suspended. Where there is love, both co-operation and non-co-operation are in fact one and the same thing.

Whether the father and son co-operate or non-co-operate with each other, both the attitudes should be the fruit of love. Co-operation is not worth the name when born out of selfishness; it is rather a kind of bribe. So also non-co-operation born out of hatred is a grave sin. Both these should be eschewed.

The non-co-operation that was introduced in 1920 was

rooted in love, maybe the people were not aware of this and joined it out of hatred. Nevertheless, if all the leaders had understood its true nature and acted in accordance with it, we could have avoided the bitter results that have followed.

We did not understand peaceful non-co-operation. Hence hatred increased, and we have now to suffer the fruit of our own actions. That hatred which inspired our non-co-operation with the British has now raised its head within our own ranks.

That hatred has appeared not only between Hindus and Muslims but also between co-operators and non-co-operators.

Hence in order to prevent such perverted results of non-co-operation, we have to suspend it. This does not mean merely that lawyers who would like to take up their legal practice or students who would like to return to Government schools could do so without a sense of shame. In fact, those lawyers who have grasped the principle of non-co-operation will not resume practice, nor will such students return to Government schools. The suspension of non-co-operation should result in our being repentant, in the non-co operator embracing the co-operator, winning the latter over through love and bearing no ill will towards him. The latter may take assistance from the Government, be he a Government pleader, a Government servant, or a member of the Legislative Assembly, still the former should make friends and associate with them all and help and be helped by them in resolving disputes between Hindus and Muslims, in removing untouchability, in boycotting foreign cloth, in getting rid of the addiction to liquor and opium and in many such tasks.

It is for the non-co-operator to take the lead in these tasks. In doing so, his tact, discretion, civility, love of peace and humility will be put to the test. It is in winning over the co-operator through love that the quality of the non-co-operator will be tested. False flattery and rudeness should both be avoided. The very first lesson consists in all of us uniting in order to strike the middle path. May God help us.

‘Duty of a Non-Co-operator (G

*Natyanan*, 19 Oct. 1924



## 65. THE FORCE OF FRIENDLY NON-CO-OPERATION

My advice to the Congress to suspend non-co-operation should not be interpreted to mean that Gujarat should give it up. Just as this advice does not apply to individuals, similarly it does not apply to provinces.

If the Congress suspends non-co-operation for the time being, it means that, taking the circumstances into account, it makes a concession to the people. However, in those places where the people and their leaders have faith in non-co-operation, where there are no disputes, where there is no lack of organization, the resolution for suspension should have no adverse effects. On the contrary, these provinces should consolidate their work and ennoble it.

For instance, the national schools in Gujarat should continue to function and grow, those lawyers who have given up their practice should abide firmly by their decision; besides, goodwill should prevail where there has been a feeling of animosity. No one should condemn or revile those who enter the legislatures or resume practice. Everyone, following the dictates of his own conscience, should continue non-co-operation or resume co-operation. The Congress resolution should result in suspension of that non-co-operation which is being practised because of the compulsion imposed by the old resolution—non-co-operation should cease to be a strategy or an experiment but should rather come to stay as a *dharma*. In other words, the people or individuals should carry on peaceful non-co-operation as a matter of duty wherever the policy of the Government is by and large harmful. Those who would like to stick to non-co-operation even without the resolution will, therefore, continue to do so.

It could be said that the Congress resolution is like a pair of crutches. We shall now have to see, after all this experience, how many will stand without the crutches—without the prop of the Congress. If some people remain steadfast we shall be able to conclude that these have grasped the principle of friendly non-co-operation. It is my firm belief that there are many such individuals and I am also convinced that among provinces too there are more than one such, Maha Gujarat being one of them.

Maha Gujarat was the first province to offer non-co-operation. I wish that it should keep up this glory. Henceforth, non-co-operation will survive only if it is untainted. It should breathe humility, discrimination, love, peacefulness, intelligence, maturity, determination and truth. Peaceful non-co-operation will emulate nature. In nature there are many imperceptible sustaining processes which we know only through their results; so too in peaceful non-co-operation. Ether is a powerful medium, but who has seen it? We know it through its results. Has anyone seen electricity? But we know of it through wires, bells, engines, which operate because of it. We do not see the seeds lying underground. If we start digging in order to see them, they would not sprout. But springing from these seeds we see plants and trees, which yield grain, fruit and foliage.

Friendly non-co-operation is a force subtler and yet mightier than all these invisible objects and forces. The conduct of the non-co-operator should, therefore, be equally subtle and invisible. There is no room in it for arrogance, hypocrisy, pretence or ostentation. Even while practising non-co-operation, by virtue of his love, he would not make the co-operator miserable. He should try and win over the hearts even of the British officials by dint of his love. Far from despising the latter, he should, if possible, render personal service to them. Even when he cannot abide by the latter's wishes, his conduct should be polite and considerate.

Anyone who cannot appreciate such non-co-operation or, cannot practise it, should rather fall back on the *status quo*, that is, co-operation. That non-co-operation alone is worth the name which can be practised by the father towards the son and *vice versa*. And I attempted to introduce this true non-co-operation in India in the year 1920. I have been well aware of the tremendous magnitude of the task, in the past as well as the present. I had and still have little capital. Everyone has the right to make an attempt and I have started my effort in pursuance of this right. I request those who have understood it in its pure form to help me. Even my present suggestion for suspension is only a form of friendly non-co-operation. The path of love is like a flame of fire; many have run away on gazing at it. Those who wish to run away may do so.

However, those who will bear with that flame will triumph.

I know of no non-co-operation which is devoid of love, nor do I even wish to know it. I have no other panacea for India's independence, for the protection of Hinduism or Islam, for Hindu-Muslim unity and for the abolition of untouchability. I believe that it is impossible to end hatred with hatred. And one of the reasons why I always put forward the spinning-wheel is its underlying peacefulness. Maulana Mahomed Ali has collected maxims in praise of the spinning-wheel from the literature of Islam and published them in his *Hamdard*. Readers will find their translations in this *Navajwan* and should reflect upon them.

'Gujarat's Dharma' (G )

*Navajwan*, 23 Nov 1924

#### 66. NON-CO-OPERATION AND FLEXIBILITY

The answer to the question whether non-co-operation should be suspended or abandoned depends purely upon the temperamental state of the answerer. He who has never believed in non-co-operation naturally wants it abandoned for ever. He who like me has always believed in and practised it, whenever and wherever necessary, and who therefore swears by it can with difficulty only be persuaded to vote for suspension in the hope, no doubt, that some time or other he will be able to carry the sceptic and the unbeliever with him and make its national working a success. Suspension therefore is the neutral state that can be accepted by all parties. Those who believe in the efficacy and necessity of non-violent non-co-operation may be permitted to cherish the hope that if the occasion necessitated revival the nation would take it up. Those who disbelieve in it will be free under suspension to preach the evil effects in their opinion of non-co-operation to convert Congressmen to their views. That is the grand opportunity that suspension gives them. And in my opinion a wholly non-co-operating Congress cannot be expected to go further than suspension. I say 'wholly non-co-operating Congress' because *Swarajists* too claim to have faith in non-co-operation.

Let me give up a secret, if secret it can be called. The very first draft prepared now more than three months ago began with a preamble reiterating belief in non-co-operation. It was quite acceptable to *Swarajists*. But it was removed by mutual consent in order to make it easier for Liberals and others to join. It was pointed out by some friends that Liberals and National Home Rulers might object to voting for the preamble. In fact, consistently with principles, extraordinary care was taken by all who had a hand in drafting the final agreement to anticipate and meet the requirements of those who have remained outside the Congress. I know that even so, the agreement falls short of the full requirements of the various political groups and parties. The reason for the defect is not due to want of effort or will, but it is due to both the *Swarajists* and myself having to take into account our respective principles, or call them limitations if that word is preferable.

Moreover, I cannot too often repeat the fact that we had the great Congress electorate in mind. It is true that it is as yet not always assertive when it ought to be but I have noticed that on occasions it can assert its will despite the effort of the leaders to the contrary. It is the same electorate that all of us have to affect and be affected by. In finding the ways and means of agreement I venture to think that each party if it is to work in unison has to be satisfied with just sufficient and no more for the requirements of its conscience.

After all, no one wants non-co-operation for the sake of it. No one prefers imprisonment to freedom. But when freedom is in jeopardy, non-co-operation may be a duty and prison may be a palace. It is for all those who would under every circumstance avoid non-co-operation to make it unnecessary for non-co-operators to resort to it. And one of the best methods of bringing about such a result is for all parties to unite, devise a scheme of *swaraj* acceptable to all parties and discover at the same time, if it is possible, a common method of enforcing that scheme.

'Suspend or Abandon?'

*Young India*, 4 Dec. 1924

## 67. SUSPENSION OF NON-CO-OPERATION

February 28, 1925

I thank you for your letter. My belief in *satyagraha* and non-violence is as green as ever. I am myself still practising non-co-operation and so are thousands of men and women of India. The agreement with those who differ from me is to suspend non-co-operation as a national programme. This suspension leaves those who wish free to enter the legislative councils of this country.

M. K. GANDHI

Letter to Dr Mancrevour  
Mahadev Desai's Diary (MSS)

## 68. NON-CO-OPERATION AND SOCIAL REFORM

A gentleman writes . . .<sup>1</sup>

The principle which we have applied to the system of British Government is applicable here also. If the people co-operate in order not to allow that system to continue, its foundation will go; it will crumble right today. Similarly, if one wishing to end the empire of evil customs offers non-co-operation that empire will certainly crack up. The question naturally arises as to what purpose will be served if only one person non-co-operates thus. One answer to this is that he who launches non-co-operation wins and becomes free from faults, and the empire is weakened to the extent of the loss of his co-operation. A house does not collapse if a single brick is removed, but everyone realizes that from the day the brick came off, the house has certainly begun to get weakened. While it is difficult for the first brick to get loose, it is not so for the second brick to fall away or get removed.

Every reform in the world has been initiated by the efforts of one man. Today even an appropriate atmosphere has been created in respect of evil customs like child-marriage, etc. Those who regard them as evil customs are lax only in regard to acting against them. If we today try to take an opinion poll, the majority will hold that customs like child-marriage

and spending lavishly on marriages are evil, and costly dresses of foreign material are reprehensible and evil. Majority opinion can be had against other such evil customs. Despite this, they have not disappeared because those who are opposed to them are truly speaking weak and, while they are brave in bragging, they are afraid to act. That cowardice will disappear only when a number of people refrain from attending such functions even by putting themselves to trouble.

'How to Tackle Evil Customs' (G )

*Navajivan*, 14 Mar 1926

<sup>1</sup> The correspondent had asked how one could rid one's caste of customs like child marriage, use of costly foreign dresses, and lavish expenditure on marriages.

#### 60 UNDERSTANDING NON-CO-OPERATION

Ashram, Sabarmati,

April 1, 1926

Dear Friend,

I have your interesting and instructive letter. Whilst I entirely agree with you that the meaning that a writer attaches to the words he uses should be clear to his readers, I know as a matter of fact that whatever failure attended Non-co-operation was not due to the people not understanding Non-violence and its implications. The reason was that though they knew it all, they were not able to act up to it.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Paul Lind  
Hamburg  
Luebeckerstrasse  
(Germany)

Letter to Paul Lind  
SN 12457

## 70. VITALITY OF NON-CO-OPERATION

Repeatedly does one read in the papers that non-co-operation was a perfect failure. Several courteous critics often apologetically broach the question in conversations, and gently tell me that the country would have made great progress if I had not led it astray by my ill-conceived non-co-operation. I should not refer to this subject, which may be said to have no bearing on the politics of the day, but for my belief that non-co-operation has come to us as an active force that may assume a universal form any moment, and but for the purpose of reassuring those who are bravely holding on in the face of criticism and scepticism. Let me, however, admit the dangerous half-truth that non-co-operation entirely failed the moment it became violent. Indeed, non-co-operation and violence are here contradictory terms. It is a living belief that violence lived on itself and it required counter-violence for its daily maintenance that gave rise to non-violent non-co-operation. The fact, therefore, is that the moment non-co-operation became violent it lost its vitality and nation-building character. But in so far as it was and remained non-violent, it was a demonstrably complete success.

The mass awakening that took place in 1920 all of a sudden was perhaps the greatest demonstration of the efficacy of non-violence. The Government has lost prestige never to be regained. Titles, law-courts, educational institutions no longer inspire the awe they did in 1920. Some of the best lawyers in the country have given up law for ever as a profession and are happy for having accepted comparative poverty as their lot. The few national schools and colleges that remain are giving a good account of themselves, as witness the great organization that came into being in Gujarat when the floods turned into a waste what was once a rich garden. But for the students and teachers of national institutions and other non-co-operators, the timely help that the afflicted peasantry of Gujarat received and so much needed would never have been at its disposal. It is possible to multiply illustrations of this character and prove that wherever there is real national life, a bond between the classes and the masses in India, non-co-operation is the cause of it.

Take again the three constructive items of the programme. *Khadi* is a growing factor in national regeneration and is serving over 1,500 villages through an army of nearly two thousand workers and is giving tangible productive relief to over fifty thousand spinners and at least ten thousand weavers, printers, dyers, dhobis and other artisans. Untouchability is a waning thing just struggling for existence. Hindu-Muslim unity of 1920-21 showed its vast possibilities. The violence, deceit, falsehood and the like that mark the rupture between the two great communities today are no doubt ugly signs, but they are a demonstration of crude self-consciousness. The process of churning that the movement of non-co-operation was and is has brought the dirt to the surface. And if non-violent non-co-operation is a living and purifying force, it will presently bring to view the pure unity that is invisibly forming itself under the very visible dirt that obtrudes itself on our gaze today. It is therefore clear to me as daylight that real *swaraj*, whenever it comes to us, will have to be not a donation rained on us from London, but a prize earned by hard and health-giving non-co-operation with organized forces of evil.

‘Was It A Failure?’

*Young India*, 10 Nov. 1927

## 71 NON-CO-OPERATION AND NON-FRATERNIZATION

January 6, 1947

Dear Abdullah Saheb,

I have carefully read your letter. The answer is obvious. My non-co-operation was purely non-violent in conception as also in effect. This does not mean that practice was always perfect. Theory and practice hardly ever coincide even as Euclid's line in practice never coincides with his theoretical definition.

The non-fraternization policy of the Allies led to disastrous results, which he who runs may see and the pity of it is that the disaster is not yet completed. No one knows where it will lead to.



I thought it better to send you the reply of which you may make any use you like. But if you prefer that I should send a public letter in answer to your letter used as an anonymous letter, I shall gladly do so.

I hope you are doing well in your new place.

H. Abdullah Saheb, I.P.

C/o. Khan Saheb

Superintendent of Police, Noakhali

Letter to M. A. Abdullah

*Pyarelal Papers*

## 72 ABORTIVE NON-CO-OPERATION

Q It has been our experience that a worker becomes power-loving after some time. How are the rest of his co-workers to keep him in check? In other words, how are we to preserve the democratic character of the organization? We have found that non-co-operation with the party in question does not help. The work of the organization itself suffers.

A. 'This is not your experience alone but it is almost universal. Love of power is usual in man and it often only dies with his death. Therefore, it is difficult for co-workers to keep him in check, if only because they are more likely than not to have the same human frailty; and so long as we do not know a single completely non-violent organization in the world, we cannot claim to know the utterly democratic character of an organization because, as can be definitely proved, no perfect democracy is possible without perfect non-violence at the back of it. The question would be proper if non-co-operation was violent as it often, if not invariably, is. Claiming to know somewhat from experience the non-violent character of non-co-operation, I suggest that given a good cause, non-violent non-co-operation must succeed and no organization can suffer through offering non-violent non-co-operation.

The questioner labours under the difficulty of having experience of non-co-operation, at best partially non-violent, at

its worst bare-faced violence sailing under the name of non-violence. The pages of the *Harijan* and *Young India* are filled with instances of abortive non-co-operation, because of these two vital defects, non-violence being partial or totally absent. During my long experience, I also noticed that those who complain of others being ambitious of holding power are no less ambitious themselves, and when it is a question of distinguishing between half a dozen and six, it becomes a thankless task.

‘Some Important Questions’

*Harijan*, 2 Mar 1947

## § 5. Boycott

### 73. BOYCOTT AND MOB-LAW

From cables and Indian papers recently to hand, it is evident that the boycott movement in Bengal is not destined to fizzle out in an inglorious fashion. Though there appears to be a deal of mob-law in preventing persons from buying British goods, the movement is so general as to show that it results from deep feeling on the part of the people. Whatever may be the result of the present agitation against the Partition,<sup>1</sup> the effect of the boycott will be productive of only good to India. It has resulted in a wonderful stimulation of native industries which, we trust, will grow more and more. It is a result unlooked for, but not the less eminently desirable. The great need of India is that national characteristics should be fostered and improved. If the resolve to use only Indian goods, so far as possible, be maintained, it will be no small help in developing the national spirit.

‘The Boycott’

*Indian Opinion*, 7 Oct. 1905

<sup>1</sup> On grounds of administrative convenience, Bengal was divided into two provinces, one of which was predominantly Hindu and the other Muslim. The Partition, which raised a storm of protest throughout India and led to the movement for boycott of British goods, was finally annulled in 1911.

## 74 NON-VIOLENT BOYCOTT AND OSIRACISM

A correspondent<sup>1</sup> writes from Hyderabad, Sind, a letter regarding boycott which I gladly publish. He refers to what is alleged to have happened to Mr. Khaparde<sup>2</sup> Hyderabad, Sind, is a far cry from Amraoti. I do not know that Mr. Khaparde has been put to all the inconveniences that the correspondent relates. Mr. Khaparde is well able to take care of himself. I hope, however, that there is much exaggeration in the information supplied to the correspondent about the treatment.

Nevertheless, the issue raised by the correspondent is important and serious. It would be a dangerous thing if, for differences of opinion, we were to proclaim social boycotts.

It would be totally opposed to the doctrine of non-violence to stop the supply of water and food. This battle of non-cooperation is a programme of propaganda by reducing profession to practice, not one of compelling others to yield obedience by violence, direct or indirect. We must try patiently to convert our opponents. If we wish to evolve the spirit of democracy out of slavery, we must be scrupulously exact in our dealings with opponents. We may not replace the slavery of the Government by that of the non-co-operationists. We must concede to our opponents the freedom we claim for ourselves and for which we are fighting. The stoutest co-operationist will bend to the stern realities of practice if there is real response from the people.

But there is a non-violent boycott which we shall be bound to practise if we are to make any impression. We must not compromise with what we believe to be an untruth, whether it resides in a white skin or a brown. Such boycott is political boycott. We may not receive favours from the new Councilors<sup>3</sup>. The voters, if they are true to their pledge, will be bound to refrain from making use of the services of those whom they have declined to regard as their representatives. They must ratify their verdict by complete abstention from any encouragement of the so-called representatives.

The public will be bound, if they are non-co-operationists, to refrain from giving these representatives any prestige by attending their political functions or parties.

I can conceive the possibility of non-violent social ostracism under certain extreme conditions, when a defiant minority refuses to bend to the majority, not out of any regard for principle but from sheer defiance or worse. But that time has certainly not arrived. Ostracism of a violent character, such as the denial of the use of public wells is a species of barbarism, which I hope will never be practised by any body of men having any desire for national self-respect and national uplift. We will free neither Islam nor India by processes of coercion, whether among ourselves or again, t Englishmen.

'Social Boycott'

*Young India*, 8 Dec 1920

<sup>1</sup> The correspondent had complained that Khaparde had been boycotted by his Panchayat and his servant denied the use of the Panchayat well, as he differed on some points from the Congress non-co-operation programme, and that this boycott had been justified by some non-co-operationists

<sup>2</sup> Ganesh Krishna Khaparde (1854-1938), lawyer, orator and public worker of Amraoti, member of the Council of State under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. He did not favour Gandhi's non-co-operation programme

<sup>3</sup> Members of the new Legislative Councils

## 75. SOCIAL BOYCOTT AND SOCIAL SERVICE

Non-co-operation being a movement of purification is bringing to the surface all our weaknesses as also excesses of even our strong points. Social boycott is an age-old institution. It is coeval with caste. It is the one terrible sanction exercised with great effect. It is based upon the notion that a community is not bound to extend its hospitality or service to an excommunicate. It answered when every village was a self-contained unit, and the occasions of recalcitrancy were rare. But when opinion is divided, as it is today, on the merits of non-co-operation, when its new application is having a trial, a summary use of social boycott in order to bend a minority to the will of the majority is a species of unpardonable violence. If persisted in, such boycott is bound to destroy the movement. Social boycott is applicable and effective when it is not felt as a punishment and accepted by the object of

boycott as a measure of discipline. Moreover, social boycott to be admissible in a campaign of non-violence must never savour of inhumanity. It must be civilized. It must cause pain to the party using it, if it causes inconvenience to its object. Thus, depriving a man of the services of a medical man, as is reported to have been done in Jhansi, is an act of inhumanity tantamount in the moral code to an attempt 'o murder.

I see no difference in murdering a man and withdrawing medical aid from a man who is on the point of dying. Even the laws of war, I apprehend, require the giving of medical relief to the enemy in need of it. 'To deprive a man of the use of an only village-well is notice to him to quit that village. Surely, non-co-operators have acquired no right to use that extreme pressure against those who do not see eye to eye with them. Impatience and intolerance will surely kill this great religious movement. We may not make people pure by compulsion. Much less may we compel them by violence to respect our opinion. It is utterly against the spirit of democracy we want to cultivate.

There are no doubt serious difficulties in our way. The temptation to resort to social boycott is irresistible when a defendant, who submits to private arbitration, refuses to abide by its award. Yet it is easy to see that the application of social boycott is more than likely to arrest the splendid movement to settle disputes by arbitration which, apart from its use as a weapon in the armoury of non-co-operation, is a movement fraught with great good to the country. People will take time before they accommodate themselves to private arbitration. Its very simplicity and inexpensiveness will repel many people even as palates jaded by spicy foods are repelled by simple combinations. All awards will not always be above suspicion. We must therefore rely upon the intrinsic merits of the movement and the correctness of awards to make itself felt.

It is much to be desired if we can bring about a complete *voluntary* boycott of law courts. That one event can bring about *swaraj*. But it was never expected that we would reach completion in any single item of non-co-operation. Public opinion has been so far developed as to recognize the courts as signs not of our liberty but of our slavery. It has made it practically

impossible for lawyers to practise their profession and be called popular leaders.

Non-co-operation has greatly demolished the prestige of law courts and to that extent of the Government. The disintegrating process is slowly but surely going on. Its velocity will suffer diminution if violent methods are adopted to hasten it. This Government of ours is armed to the teeth to meet and check forces of violence. It possesses nothing to check the mighty forces of non-violence. How can a handful of Englishmen resist a voluntary expression of opinion accompanied by the voluntary self-denial of thirty crores of people?

I hope, therefore, that non-co-operation workers will beware of the snares of social boycott. But the alternative to social boycott is certainly not social intercourse. A man who defies strong, clear public opinion on vital matters is not entitled to social amenities and privileges. We may not take part in his social functions such as marriage feasts, we may not receive gifts from him. But we dare not deny social service. The latter is a duty. Attendance at dinner parties and the like is a privilege which it is optional to withhold or extend. But it would be wisdom to err on the right side and to exercise the weapon even in the limited sense described by me on rare and well-defined occasions. And in every case the user of the weapons will use it at his own risk. The use of it is not as yet in any form a duty. No one is entitled to its use if there is any danger of hurting the movement.

‘Social Boycott’

*Young India*, 16 Feb. 1921

## 76. BOYCOTT OF FOREIGN CLOTH

Everybody is anxious that at this critical juncture in our history, we should be able to exhibit some real strength. It is being more and more realized that such strength can be developed and shown only through boycott of foreign cloth as distinguished from British cloth. In this boycott it is possible

for our mills to play an important, indeed a decisive, part if they wish.

Some day or other they will have to choose between this alien Government and the people. There is no doubt that to a large extent they are dependent for their existence upon the toleration if not the goodwill of the Government. Thoreau told the truth when he said that possession of riches under an evil government was a sin and poverty was virtue. The riches of the rich are always at the disposal of the government of the day whether it is good or bad.

But if the mills are dependent for their existence on the toleration or goodwill of the Government, they are no less so on the toleration or goodwill of the people. They can afford to ignore the people only so long as the latter remain ignorant, supine or disunited. But the past seven years have not been lived in vain by the nation. The mass awakening that has taken place will never die. No one can tell when and how the people will show their strength.

But the mills occupy a privileged position. By showing a little courage, a little consideration for the true interests of the nation and by exercising a little self-sacrifice they can serve both the Government and the people. They can convert the Government and advance the people's cause.

This is how in my humble opinion they can do it:

They can standardize their prices taking the lowest average of a number of top and lean years.

They can come to terms with the leaders organizing boycott as to the quantity and quality of cloth required for the nation.

They can refrain from manufacturing those varieties that can be easily and immediately produced by *khadi* organizations, thus freeing their energy for manufacturing more of the varieties they can at the present moment more easily manufacture than the *khadi* organizations.

They can limit their profits to a minimum and let the surplus, if any, be devoted to the fulfilment of the boycott or, if that be unnecessary, to the improvement of the condition of the labourers.

This would mean all-round honesty, perseverance, mutual trust, a voluntary and honourable triple alliance between labour, capital and the consumer. It would mean capacity for

organization on a vast scale. And if we are to attain boycott of foreign cloth through non-violence, we shall have some day or other to fulfil the tests just enumerated by me.

In my humble opinion we are eminently fitted for the task. The organization required for the purpose is not unfamiliar to us. The only question is, have we the will? Have the mill-owners enough vision, enough love of the country? If they have, they can take the lead.

Let me redeclare my own faith. For boycott to be swiftly brought about a combination between *khadi* and truly indigenous mills is desirable, but not absolutely necessary. I use the words truly indigenous, because we have bogus mills in India which are Indian only in the sense that they are located in the country but whose shareholders, whose management, whose spirit are mainly, when not wholly, foreign. But if the indigenous mills cannot or will not lead or join the national movement, I am convinced that *khadi* alone can achieve the boycott if the politically-minded India has the will, the faith and the energy required for the purpose. We have not enough horsepower expressed through steam engines, oil engines or electricity, but we have an inexhaustible reservoir of manpower lying idle and pleading to be used, and essentially qualified for the purpose. Oh, for a faith that would see and use this supply of living power!

‘What Can Our Mills Do?’

*Young India*, 15 Mar 1928

## 77. NON-VIOLENT AND VIOLENT BOYCOTT

It has been reported that the *satyagrahis* of Bardoli are getting ready to use the weapon of boycott against those who agree to pay the revenue to the Government. This weapon is a powerful one and the *satyagrahi* can use it only within limits. Boycott can be violent as well as non-violent. It is only the latter kind that a *satyagrahi* may use. At the moment I will only give examples of the two forms of boycott.

Non-violent boycott may mean not accepting any service. Refusal to serve may involve violence.



Non-violent boycott may include a refusal to dine at the house of the person boycotted, refusal to attend marriages and such other functions at his place, doing no business with him and taking no help from him.

On the other hand, refusing to nurse the boycotted person if he is sick, not allowing doctors to visit him, refusing to help in performing the last rites if he happens to die, refusing to allow him to make use of wells, temples, etc., all this is violent boycott. Deeper reflection will reveal that non-violent boycott can be continued for a long period and no external force can prove effectual in terminating it, whereas violent boycott cannot continue for long and external force can be used in a large measure to put an end to it. Ultimately violent boycott only does disservice to a movement. Many such instances can be quoted from the era of non-co-operation. However, on this occasion, the distinction that I have pointed out should be enough for the *satyagrahis* and the workers of Bardoli.

'The Weapon of Boycott' G )  
Navajivan, 18 Mar 1928

#### 78 LIMITED BOYCOTT, DEMOCRACY, AND DHARMA

In my speeches during this march I have said quite a lot about boycott. I have no idea how the newspapers have reported those parts of my speeches. It is necessary to consider and lay down the limits of boycott here as the subject is an important one. As this struggle is a sacred, truthful and non-violent one, that is to say, as it is a religious struggle, it is absolutely essential that no mistake should be made consciously or otherwise. Even the minutest error committed cannot but harm it.

Boycott has been working in two ways. one is directed against the Government officials and the other against those who do not respect public opinion for instance, Headmen and such other persons.

It is necessary, indeed it is our duty, not to bow to the official when he visits our village and not to go and pay

homage to him. Non-co-operation implies that we should not attend to this official's needs and provide no facilities to him. A bullock-cart-owner should not put his cart at his disposal. The potter should not fetch drinking water for him, the grocer should not provide him with any provisions, and the Headman should not give him a mattress belonging either to the village or to himself. This is so because the official expects these facilities by virtue of his office. The purpose behind not providing these facilities is not to impose any hardship on him but to put an end to his authority and it may also involve an element of civil disobedience.

What if the official is dying of hunger or suffering pain and no one is there to attend on him? At such a time, even at the cost of personal inconvenience, we should serve him. For instance, if his car breaks down, and he is in need of food, we should provide him food and not expect any money in return if he does not happen to have any. Supposing he is suddenly taken ill and there is no one to attend on him, we should nurse him with as much care as we would show in nursing our own relatives. We bear him no ill will as a human being. We hate his administration. The Government has not so far become insane, as it has not had to put up with much inconvenience in carrying on the administration. However, once it is really inconvenienced, there is every possibility of its becoming so and transgressing all bounds. It is possible that when this does take place, its officials will be ordered forcibly to exact anything they need from the public. At such a time full use could be made of boycott as explained above. At such a time we realize that boycott is surely our *dharma*. The official assumes that by virtue of his office the people are obliged to provide all facilities for him. People would be said to have set themselves free only when they can disprove this belief and in the process put up with any hardships that they may have to face. They will be said to have triumphed when they do not yield to such force.

Today boycott can be regarded as being extremely simple. However, even when Government officials receive permission to commit robbery and the people, despite the fact that they have been rendered penniless, do not voluntarily give even a twig to be used as a toothbrush, they will be regarded as

having carried out their duty of boycott. However, it should be borne in mind that even when this does occur, if the official is placed in a difficult situation and the authorities do not come to his rescue, we should attend to his needs. This should be considered an occasion for practising the same *dharma* towards a friend and an enemy. For a *satyagrahi* there are no enemies in this world, he cannot have any, he should not regard anyone as such. He would boycott even his own son or father if either of these two happened to be an official. For a *satyagrahi*, there should be no distinction between his own relatives and those holding no such relationship. He would never do to others what he would not do to his own relatives.

Let us now take the case of a Headman. Although the entire village wants him to resign, he does not have the courage to do so, or he does not wish to do so out of self-interest. He should not be boycotted on this ground. Such boycott would amount to coercion. Compelling the Headman to resign would amount to making him forcibly perform a meritorious deed. But there can be no use of force, so far as our *dharma* is concerned. A democratic form of government can never be established by getting anyone to do something by force. To use such force on this nation which is half-dead would be a great sin and, considering the matter solely from the point of view of expediency, we shall see that we shall never be able to serve our purpose by the use of such force. Whether we succeed or not, such force is nothing but violence. Whether the Headman resigns or not is for him to choose. It would be a good thing if he did so yielding to public opinion, but force cannot be used against him if he does not resign.

But he cannot exercise his authority; he cannot make the people do anything whatsoever for him by virtue of his authority. He has a dual role to play: he is an official and he is a villager. He will not get any services as an official; as a villager he has a right to get provisions, etc., which he wants. To refuse him these amounts to compelling him to resign. A *satyagrahi* cannot do so.

The people have a right to carry on a limited social boycott of those who defy public opinion and at times it becomes their duty to do so. Society should not honour a Headman who

clings to his office for selfish reasons, in other words, although it would meet its daily requirements, it would sever all other connections with him, people would not attend marriages in his home, decline invitations to dinners from him and although they would share his sorrows, they would refuse to share in his enjoyments. There should be neither bitterness, nor ill will nor violence in such boycott. What should we do if the Headman happens to be our own brother? We should give him the treatment that we would expect from society for ourselves.

We have now considered three types of boycott.

1. boycott of officials because of their office,
2. boycott through use of force of such persons as Headmen, and
3. limited boycott of such persons as the Headmen who refuse to respect public opinion.

The first type of boycott deserves to be practised, it is our *dharma* to do so. Only those who have courage should practise it. It is well to remember that such boycott may result in occasions when we shall have to put up with extreme hardships. At present the Congress does not ask for such boycott. This latter has already begun in certain parts of Gujarat as the Gujaratis are used to it and have developed a good ability to practise it. It is the special *dharma* of Gujarat to do so in view of Sardar Vallabhbhai's imprisonment. However, those who cannot continue to carry it on at the critical hour should not do so as there is no harm in their not practising it. It will be harmful, however, if it is given up once it has begun.

The second type of boycott involving the use of force is always to be eschewed, as it involves violence and there is every possibility of its doing great harm to the people.

The third, that is, limited boycott, is well worth practising. In every task which the *satyagrahi* undertakes, he has himself to bear suffering but he must never make the opponent suffer. The former is helpless if in the course of his own suffering or his practising his *dharma*, the opponent has to suffer or put up with inconvenience.

At present what I ask of the people is civil disobedience of the salt law. If nothing more can be done, let everyone sit

quiet; but it will be both dangerous and harmful if they retreat after having taken a step forward.

'Limits of Boycott' (G )  
*Navajivan*, 30 Mar 1930

## § 6. Strikes

### 79 SECURING AND DOING JUSTICE

February 27, 1918

We saw in yesterday's leaflet what the workers' pledge was. We have now to consider what we should do to carry out that pledge. We know that the employers have crores of rupees and the workers have nothing. If workers have no money however, they have hands and feet with which they can work, and there is no part of the world which can do without workers. Hence, if only he knows it, the worker holds the key to the situation. Wealth is unavailing without him. If he realizes this, he can be sure of success. But the worker who would wield such power must possess certain qualities of character, without which he would be at the mercy of others. Let us see what these qualities are:

1. The worker should be truthful. There is no reason for him to tell a lie. Even if he tells a lie, he will not get the desired wage. The truthful man can be firm and a worker who is firm is never defeated.
2. He should possess courage. Many of us become permanent slaves through fear of what might happen to us if we lost our jobs.
3. He should have a sense of justice. If he asks for wages higher than his deserts, there will be hardly anyone who will employ him. The increase we have demanded in this struggle is reasonable. We should, therefore, have faith that sooner or later we are bound to get justice.
4. He will not be angry with his employer nor bear him any

grudge. After all, when everything is over, the worker is to serve under him. Every human being is liable to err. We think the employers are in the wrong in refusing the increase asked for. If we remain straightforward till the end, the employers are sure to revise their attitude. At present they are angry. Also, they suspect that, if the present demands of the workers are granted, they will repeatedly harass them. To remove this suspicion, we should do our utmost to reassure the employers by our behaviour. The first thing to that end is to harbour no grudge against them.

5. Every worker should remember that the struggle is bound to involve suffering. But happiness follows suffering voluntarily undertaken. It is but suffering for the worker to be denied a wage sufficient to enable him to make both ends meet. Because of our ignorance, however, we endure this and manage to live somehow. Seeking a remedy against this suffering, we have told the employers that it is not possible for us to maintain ourselves without the wage increase demanded and that, if it is not granted to us and we are not saved from continuous starvation, we would rather starve right now. How long will the employers remain unmoved by our suffering?

6. Lastly, the poor have their saviour in God. Our duty is to make the effort and then, fully assured that we are bound to get what He has ordained for us, remain peaceful while our request is not yet granted.

A worker who behaves in this manner will never find it difficult to keep his pledge. We shall discuss in tomorrow's leaflet how the workers may maintain themselves during the period of the lock-out.

'Ahmedabad Mill-Hands' Strike',

Leaflet No. 2 (G.)

*Ek Dharmayuddha*

## 80. THE PLIGHT OF WORKERS

March 1, 1918

We have said how workers can fulfil their pledge and what they should do during the lock-out. In this leaflet we shall explain how we propose to help them. It is our duty to do this.

### LET US STATE, FIRST, WHAT WE CANNOT DO:

- (1) We shall not help the workers in doing anything which is wrong.
- (2) We shall have to abandon the workers and cease helping them if they do anything wrong or make inflated demands or commit violence.
- (3) We can never wish ill to the employers; in all that we do, we are bound to consider their interests. We shall promote the workers' interest while duly safeguarding the employers'.

### NOW ABOUT WHAT WE SHALL DO FOR THE WORKERS:

- (1) We are with the workers so long as they conduct themselves well, as they have done so far.
- (2) We shall do all we can to obtain for them 35 per cent increase in wages.
- (3) We are, as yet, only entreating the employers. We have not tried so far to win public sympathy or educate public opinion. But we shall be prepared, if the situation demands it, to acquaint the whole of India with the workers' plight and hope that we shall succeed in obtaining public sympathy for our cause.
- (4) We shall not rest till the workers get what they are entitled to.
- (5) We are making an effort to inform ourselves of the condition of the workers in its economic, moral and educational aspects. We shall show the workers how they may improve their economic condition; we shall strive to raise their moral level; we shall think out and teach them ways and means of living in cleanliness and we shall work for the intellectual improvement of such of them as live in ignorance.
- (6) We shall not ourselves eat or dress without providing

food and clothing to such of the workers as are reduced to destitution in the course of the struggle.<sup>1</sup>

(7) We shall nurse the sick among them and get for them the services of *vaid*s and doctors.

We have undertaken this task with a full sense of our responsibility. We consider the workers' demand to be entirely reasonable and it is because we believe that satisfaction of their demand will eventually serve rather than harm the employers' interests that we have taken up this cause.

'Ahmedabad Mill-Hands' Strike',

Leaflet No 4 (G.)

*Ek Dharmayuddha*

<sup>1</sup> The following formed part of the advisers' pledge 'If in this struggle any persons are reduced to starvation and are unable to get work, we shall feed and clothe them before we feed and clothe ourselves'

## 81. JUSTICE, NOT COERCION

March 13, 1918<sup>1</sup>

Rumours are afloat that many workers are willing to resume work, but that others prevent them by coercion and threats of physical assault. Workers should remember our pledge that, if they bring pressure to bear on their fellows and use threats to stop them from going to work, we shall not find it possible to help them. In this struggle, he alone will win who keeps his pledge. No one can be forced to do this. It is essentially a voluntary matter. We want to be faithful to our pledge and go ahead. If a man, being afraid, ventures nothing, he can never advance. Such a one has lost everything. Let every worker, therefore, bear in mind that he is not to use pressure on others in any form or manner. If coercion is used, the whole struggle is likely to be weakened and will collapse. For the success of their struggle, the workers are to rely solely on the rightness of their demand and of their conduct. If their demand is unjust, they cannot succeed. The demand may be just. But even then the worker will lose his case despite all his suffering if, in securing it, he resorts to untruth or falsehood,



to violence or coercion, or is apathetic. It is very essential in this struggle that workers do not resort to coercion and that they provide for their maintenance by putting in physical labour.

'Ahmedabad Mill-Hands' Strike',  
Leaflet No. 13 (G)  
*Ek Dharmayuddha*

<sup>1</sup> This leaflet was issued on the day following the ending of the lockout.

## 82 THE WEAPON OF LABOUR

March 15, 1918<sup>1</sup>

As the weapon of the rich is money, that of the workers is their labour. Just as a rich man would starve if he did not employ his wealth, even so if the worker did not employ his wealth did not work he would also starve. One who does not work is not a worker. A worker who is ashamed of working has no right to eat. If, therefore, the workers desire to fulfil their pledge in this great struggle, they should learn to do some work or other. Those who collect funds and, remaining idle, maintain themselves out of them do not deserve to win. Workers are fighting for their pledge. Those who want food without working for it do not, it may be said, understand what a pledge means. He alone can keep his pledge who can feel shame or has self-respect. Is there anyone who will not look down on those who desire to be maintained on public funds without doing any work? It behoves us, therefore, that we maintain ourselves by doing some work. If a worker does not work, he is like sugar which has lost its sweetness. If the sea-water lost its salt, where would we get our salt from? If the worker did not work, the world would come to an end.

This struggle is not merely for a 35 per cent increase, it is to show that workers are prepared to suffer for their rights. We are fighting to uphold our honour. We have launched on this struggle in order to better ourselves. If we start using public funds improperly, we shall grow worse and not better.

Consider the matter from any angle you choose, you will see that we must maintain ourselves by our own labour. Farhad<sup>2</sup> broke stones for the sake of Shirin, his beloved. For the workers, their pledge is their Shirin. Why should they not break stones for its sake? For the sake of truth, Harishchandra<sup>3</sup> sold himself; why should workers not suffer hardships for upholding their pledge? For the sake of their honour, Imam Hassan and Hussain suffered greatly. Should we not be prepared even to die for our honour? If we get money while we remain idle at home and fight with that money, it would be untrue to say that we are fighting.

We hope, therefore, that every worker will work to maintain himself so that he may be able to keep his oath and remain firm. If the struggle lengthens, it will be because of weakness on our part. So long as the mill-owners believe that workers will not take to any labour and, therefore, will eventually succumb, they will have no compassion and will continue to resist the demand. So long as they are not convinced that workers will never give in, they will not be moved by compassion and will continue to oppose the workers even at the sacrifice of their own profits. When, however, they feel certain that the workers will, under no circumstances, give up their resolve, they will show compassion enough and welcome the workers back. Today the employers believe that the workers will not do any manual labour and so are bound to succumb soon. If the workers depend on others' money for their maintenance, the mill-owners will think that the source is bound to be exhausted sooner or later, and so will not take the workers seriously. If, on the other hand, workers who have no other means of subsistence begin to do manual work, the employers will see that they will lose their workers unless they grant the 35 per cent increase forthwith. Thus, it is for us to shorten or lengthen the struggle. We shall be free the sooner by enduring greater suffering just now. If we flinch from suffering, the struggle is bound to be protracted. Those who have weakened will, we hope, consider all these points and become strong again.

Some workers are inclined to believe that those who have weakened cannot be persuaded to become strong. This is a wrong impression altogether. It is the duty of us all—yours

and ours— to try, with gentleness, to persuade those who have weakened for one reason or another. It is also our duty to educate those who do not know what the struggle means. What we have been saying is that we may not use threats, tell lies, or resort to violence, or exert pressure in any manner to keep anyone away from work. If, despite persuasion, anyone resumes work, that is no reason for us to lose heart. Even if only one person holds out, we shall never forsake him.

‘Ahmedabad Mill-Hands’ Strike’,  
 Leaflet No. 14 (G)  
*Ek Dharmayuddha*

<sup>1</sup> This leaflet was issued on the day Gandhi commenced his fast.

Central figure in a Persian poem.

<sup>2</sup> Legendary king of Ayodhya who went through many ordeals for the sake of truth.

### 83 THE PRINCIPLE OF ARBITRATION

[18 March 1918]<sup>1</sup>

The settlement which I place before you merely upholds the workers’ pledge. There is nothing more in it. I pleaded with the mill-owners as well as I could. I asked them to grant a permanent increase of 35 per cent. They felt, however, that that would be too much. Let me say one thing. Our demand, too, was one-sided. Before the struggle commenced, we had tried to ascertain their point of view, but they did not respond to our request. The mill-owners now accept the principle of arbitration. I have agreed that the matter be entrusted to an arbitrator.<sup>2</sup> I shall succeed in getting 35 per cent from the arbitrator. If the arbitrator decides on something less, I will own that we had been wrong in making our demand. The mill-owners said that they had their pledge to abide by just as we had ours. I told them that they had no right to take any such pledge, but they insisted that theirs too was equally valid. I thought over the pledges of both. My fast stood in the way. I could not tell them ‘I will break my fast only if you concede my demand.’ I felt that this would have been cowardice on

my part I, therefore, agreed that for the present both may maintain their pledges, and what the arbitrator decides should finally prevail. Our settlement, therefore, is briefly this:

On the first day, an increase of 35 per cent will be given in keeping with our pledge; on the second day, we get 20 per cent in keeping with the mill-owners'. From the third day till the date of the arbitrator's award, an increase of  $27\frac{1}{2}$  per cent will be paid and subsequently, if the arbitrator decides on 35 per cent, the mill-owners will give us  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent more and, if he decides on 20 per cent, we shall refund  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

What I have brought for you is enough to fulfil the letter of the pledge, but not its spirit. Spirit does not mean much to us and so we must rest content with the letter.

We have taken counsel together in this struggle, therefore, do not take an oath hereafter without consulting us. He who has no experience, and has attempted nothing big, has no right to take an oath. After twenty years' experience, I have come to the conclusion that I am qualified to take a pledge. I see that you are not yet so qualified. Do not therefore take an oath without consulting your seniors. If the occasion demands one, come to us, assured that we shall be prepared to die for you as we now are. But remember that we shall help you only in respect of a pledge you have taken with our concurrence. A pledge taken in error can certainly be ignored. You have yet to learn how and when to take a pledge.

Speech to the Ahmedabad Mill-Hands (G.)

*Ek Dharmayuddha*

<sup>1</sup> The settlement was arrived at on the morning of the 18th. According to *Ek Dharmayuddha* Gandhi announced it to the workers gathered in their thousands under the *babui* tree (evidently the same day). The meeting was attended by the Commissioner and prominent men of Ahmedabad.

\* Prof. Anandshankar Dhruva, who was acceptable to both parties, was appointed

# 84. THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR

August 15, 1920

Mr. Chairman and Friends,<sup>1</sup>

I hope that you will excuse me for not standing whilst speaking. Though my voice has become stronger than it was over a year ago, my body has not become as strong as I should like to be so as to enable me to stand up and speak. It gives me very great pleasure to renew your acquaintance a second time. I think I told you last year, when I had the privilege of addressing some of you, that I considered myself a fellow-labourer with you. Perhaps you are labourers not by choice, but somewhat by compulsion. But I entertain such high regard for labour. I entertain such great respect for the dignity of labour that I have thrown in my lot with the labourers. And for many many years now, I have lived in their midst like them labouring with my hands and with my feet.

I believe that it is the lot of life for every sentient being that before he or she eats, he or she must use hands and feet. In labouring therefore with your bodies you are simply following the law of your being and there is not the slightest reason for you to feel dissatisfied with your lot. On the contrary, I would ask to regard yourselves as trustees for the nation for which you are labouring. A nation may do without its millionaires, without its capitalists, but a nation can never do without its labour. There is one fundamental distinction between your labour and my labour. You are labouring for someone else. In a natural state perhaps we would expect everyone to be his own master, viz., to be his own labourer. You are not your own labourer. I consider that I am labouring for myself, i e., I am my own master.

In a natural state, we should all find ourselves our own masters. But such a state of things cannot be reached in a day. It therefore becomes a very serious question for you to consider how you are to conduct yourselves as labourers serving for others. Just as there is no shame in being a labourer, so also there is no shame in labouring for others. It becomes necessary to find the true relation between master and servant. What are your duties? What are your responsibilities? And

what are your rights? It is simple enough to understand that your right is to receive the hire for your labour and it is equally simple to know that your duty is to work to the best of your ability for the wages you receive. And it is my universal experience that as a rule labour discharges its obligations more effectively and more conscientiously. The masters have corresponding duties towards the labourers. It therefore becomes necessary for labour to find out how far labour can impose its will upon the masters. If we find that we are not adequately paid, or adequately housed, how are we to claim and receive enough wages and good accommodation? Who is to determine the standard of wages and the standard of comfort required by the labourers? The best way, no doubt, is that you labourers understand your own rights, understand the method of enforcing those rights and enforce them. For that you require a little previous training and education.

You have been brought to a central point from various parts of the country, and find yourselves duly congregated together and it was in the stress of circumstances perhaps you did not earn enough on your fields, or in your previous occupation, that you found yourselves in the hands of a particular master. But later you find that you are not getting enough and that you are not properly housed. But you do not know how to go about your work. I therefore venture to suggest to Mr. Wadia and those who are leading you and advising you that their first business is to guide you, not by giving you a knowledge of letters, but a knowledge of human affairs and human relations. I make this suggestion respectfully and in all humility, because my survey of labour in India, in so far as I have been able to undertake it, and my long experience of conditions of labour in South Africa led me to the conclusion that in a large majority of cases, leaders consider that they have to give labour a knowledge of the three R's. That undoubtedly is a necessity of the case. But it is to be preceded by a proper knowledge of your own rights and a way of enforcing them. In conducting many a strike I have found that it is possible to give this fundamental education to the labourers within a day. That brings me to the subject of strikes.

Strikes are in the air today throughout the world. On the slightest pretext, the labourer goes in for strikes. My own

experience of the last six months is that many strikes have done harm to labour rather than good. I have studied in so far as I could the strike in Bombay, the strike at the Tata Iron Works, the strike in Gorakhpur twice, and the celebrated strike of the Railway labourers in the Punjab. In all these four strikes I was more or less in connection with the labourers and what I am about to tell is derived from the labourers themselves. There was partial failure in all these strikes. Labour was not able to make good its points to the fullest extent. What was the reason? Labour was badly led. I want you to distinguish between two classes of leaders. You have leaders derived from yourselves and they are in their turn advised and led by those who are not themselves labourers, but who are in sympathy or expected to be in sympathy with labour. You do not require me to tell you that unless there is correspondence between yourselves, your own leaders, and those who are above you, unless there is perfect correspondence between these three there is bound to be failure. Now in all these four strikes, that perfect correspondence was lacking.

There is another substantial reason which I discovered. The labourers looked at pecuniary support from their unions for the maintenance. No labour can prolong a strike indefinitely so long as labour depends upon the resources of its union. No strike can absolutely succeed which cannot be indefinitely prolonged. In all the strikes that I have ever conducted, I have laid down one indispensable rule, that labourers must find their own support. That is the secret of success. And therein consists your education. You should be able to perceive that if you are able to serve one master and command a particular wage your labour must be worth and must be fit to receive that wage anywhere else. Strikers therefore cannot be expected to be idlers and to succeed. Your demands must be just and there should be no pressure exerted upon those whom you call blacklegs. Any force of this kind exerted against your own fellow-labourers is bound to react upon yourselves. I think your advisers will tell you that these three conditions being fulfilled no strike need ever fail. That at once demonstrates to you the necessity of thinking a hundred times before undertaking a strike. So much for your rights and the method of enforcing it.

But as labour becomes organized, strikes must become few and far between and as your mental development progresses further you will find immediately that the principle of arbitration replaces the principle of strikes. Time has now arrived when we should reach this stage. I will not detain you on this point any further.

I would now venture to say a few words in connection with your national responsibilities. Just as you have to understand obligations amongst yourselves with reference to your own masters, so also it is necessary to understand your obligations to the nation to which you belong. Then your primary education is complete. If you sufficiently realize the dignity of labour, you will realize that you have a duty to discharge by your country. You must therefore find out the affairs of our country in the best manner you can. You must find it out without having to wade through a cartful of books, who are your governors, what are your duties in relation to them, what they can do to you and what you can do to them. I do not propose to go into the existing conditions. I have not come here to give you a long address. It is impossible for me to interest you in the intricate questions that are *now* agitating the country. It is enough for me to tell you that it is your bounden duty to understand your responsibilities and your duties as citizens of this great land. In my humble opinion it is not possible for you to live up to your religion fully until you undertake to understand these things.

My task this evening is finished, if I have stimulated your desire after a knowledge of the affairs of your country and I hope that you will not rest content until you have found out through your advisers and leaders the principal affairs of this country. I thank the controllers of labour here for extending this invitation to me and I thank you all for having come and given me patient hearing. I wish to give you my assurance that whenever you find that you need any advice from me, it is yours. It therefore grieves me very much that when you invited me at one time to come to Madras, I was unable, because I was preoccupied, to respond to your invitation to come to Madras. But you will accept my assurance that it was not due to want of will, it was due to want of ability. I wish you all the prosperity that you may deserve and I hope



that you will discharge yourselves as good citizens of this country

Speech on Rights and Duties of Labour Madras

*The Hindu*, 16 Aug 1920

SWMG, pp 784-8

<sup>1</sup> At a meeting at Madras Beach under the auspices of the Central Labour Board  
B. P. Wadia presiding

## 85. HONOURABLE PARTNERS

Udai [-Kanchan],

March 23, 1946

How should capital behave when labour strikes? This question is in the air and has great importance at the present moment. One way is that of suppression named, or nicknamed, 'American'. It consists in suppression of labour through organized *goondaism*. Everybody would consider this as wrong and destructive. The other way, right and honourable, consists in considering every strike on its merits and giving labour its due—not what capital considers as due but what labour itself would so consider and enlightened public opinion acclaim as just.

One preliminary question will justly arise: why should there be a strike at all in any well-regulated concern? Strikes ought to be impossible when there is perfect understanding between capital and labour, mutual respect and recognition of equality. And since differences there would be sometimes between employers and employed even in the best-regulated concerns, why should there not be a system of arbitration between the parties so that they will always readily carry out in perfect good faith awards of arbitrators?

But we have to consider things not as they should be but as they are. As time progresses, the labour world is getting more insistent in its demands which are daily increasing, and it does not hesitate to resort to violence in its impatient enforcement of those demands. New methods of enforcing them are being employed. Workers do not hesitate to injure the property of

the employers, dislocate machinery, harass old men and women who would not join the strike and forcibly keep out black-legs. In these circumstances, how are the employers to behave?

In my opinion, employers and employed are equal partners even if employees are not considered superior. But what we see today is the reverse. The reason is that the employers harness intelligence on their side. They have the superior advantage which concentration of capital brings with it, and they know how to make use of it. One individual rupee has very little potency, but when money combines as capital, the combine derives a power different from and far in excess of the mere sum total of the individual rupees. A million drops individually are negligible. But in combination they make the ocean carrying on its bosom a fleet of ocean hounds. Whilst capital in India is fairly organized, labour is still in a more or less disorganized condition in spite of unions and their federation. Therefore it lacks the power that true combination gives.

Moreover it lacks intelligence, so much so that individuals fight against individuals, unions against unions. Lack of intelligence leads to its exploitation by selfish and unscrupulous men even to the point of creating and promoting mischief. They know no better, being ignorant of the secret of non-violence. The net result is that the workers suffer. If labour were to understand the working of non-violence, the power generated by combination would any day exceed the power of dead metal in the hands of a few capitalists.

Hence my advice to the employers would be that they should willingly regard workers as the real owners of the concerns which they fancy they have created. They should further regard it as their duty to equip the employees with sound education that would draw out the intelligence dormant in them and gladly promote and welcome the power that this combination of the workers gives them.

This noble work cannot be done in a day by the employers. Meanwhile what should those do who have to face the destruction wrought by strikers in their concerns? I would unhesitatingly advise such employers that they should at once offer the strikers full control of the concern which is as much

the strikers' as theirs. They will vacate their premises not in a huff but because it is right, and, to show their goodwill, they would offer the employees the assistance of their engineers and other skilled staff. The employers will find in the end that they will lose nothing. Indeed their right action will disarm opposition, and they will earn the blessings of their men. They will have made proper use of their capital. I would not consider such action as benevolent. It would be an intelligent use by the capitalists of their resources and honest dealing in regard to the employees whom they would have converted into honourable partners.

'Capitalism and Strikes'

*Haryana*, 31 Mar 1946

## 86 CO-OPERATION AMONG STRIKERS

New Delhi,  
May 26, 1946

Q How should a strike be conducted so that hooliganism and violence are avoided?

A. A strike should be spontaneous and not manipulated. If it is organized without any compulsion there would be no chance for *goondaism* and looting. Such a strike would be characterized by perfect co-operation amongst the strikers. It should be peaceful and there should be no show of force. The strikers should take up some work either singly or in co-operation with one another, in order to earn their bread. The nature of such work should have been thought out beforehand. It goes without saying that in a peaceful, effective and firm strike of this character there will be no room for rowdiness or looting. I have known of such strikes. I have not presented a Utopian picture.

'Question Box' (G )

*Haryana*, 2 June 1946

*Haryanabandhu*, 2 June 1946

## 87. STRIKES AND PUBLIC SYMPATHY

Uruli Kanchan,

August 3, 1946

The statement in the daily press that I had approved of the postal strike<sup>1</sup> is not true. One day a postman asked to be allowed to just say '*Vande Mataram*' to me. Kanu Gandhi brought him to me. The visitor, however, asked for my blessings for the postmen's strike which had just then commenced. I said to him that if the strike was justified and if they conducted themselves absolutely peacefully, they must succeed. This was no approval of the particular strike. Apart, however, from what I said and apart from the merits of the postmen's strike, I feel that as an expert in successful strikes of an absolutely peaceful nature, I owe it to the conductor of this strike as to those of all others and to the public to state the conditions of successful strikes.

Obviously there should be no strike which is not justifiable on merits. No unjust strike should succeed. All public sympathy must be withheld from such strikes.

The public has no means of judging the merits of a strike, unless it is backed by impartial persons enjoying public confidence. Interested men cannot judge the merits of their own case. Hence, there must be an arbitration accepted by the parties or a judicial adjudication. As a rule, the matter does not come before the public when there is accepted arbitration or adjudication. Cases have, however, happened when haughty employers have ignored awards or misguided employees, conscious of their power to assert themselves, have done likewise and have decided upon forcible extortion.

Strikes for economic betterment should never have a political end as an ulterior motive. Such a mixture never advances the political end and generally brings trouble upon strikers, even when they do not dislocate public life, as in the case of public utility services such as the postal strike. The Government may suffer some inconvenience but will not come to a standstill. Rich persons will put up expensive postal services but the vast mass of the poor people will be deprived during such a strike of a convenience of primary importance to which they have become used for generations. Such strikes can only

take place when every other legitimate means has been adopted and failed

In the present case we have National Provincial Governments Postmen should consult these Governments before resorting to the extreme step So far as I am aware, Shri Bala-saheb Kher,<sup>2</sup> Shri Mangaldas Pakvasa<sup>3</sup> and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel have intervened If their advice has been rejected by the men, they have taken a serious and dangerous step If all these powerful unions disregard their own Governments and the Working Committee members, they disown the Congress They have a right to do so if the Congress sells their interest

Sympathetic strikes must be taboo until it is conclusively proved that the affected men have exhausted all the legitimate means at their disposal and until the Congress has been proved to have betrayed or neglected their interest until the Congress has called for sympathetic strikes in order to secure justice from obdurate and unsympathetic authorities

One hears of strikes all over the country to paralyse the Government This paralysis is an extreme political step, open only to a body like the Congress, not even to unions, however powerful they may be If the Congress is the people's arm *par excellence* for the purpose of winning Independence, paralysing action should be retained solely in the hands of the Congress

At the present moment, the Congress is engaged in making a success of the proposed Constituent Assembly There are interminable difficulties in the way Paralysing strikes must seriously hamper Congress action

It follows from the foregoing that political strikes must be treated on their own merits and must never be mixed with or related to economic strikes Political strikes have a definite place in non-violent action They are never taken up haphazard They must be open, never led by *goondarism* They are calculated never to lead to violence

Therefore, my humble suggestion to all strikers is to make a frank declaration of submission to arbitration or adjudication to seek the guidance of the Congress and abide by its advice and for all sympathetic strikes to stop whilst the Congress is engaged in making the contemplated Constituent As-

sembly a success and while Provincial National Governments are functioning

'Strikes

*Haryan*, 11 Aug 1946

<sup>1</sup> This commenced in Bombay on 11th July and ended on 2nd August 1946

<sup>2&3</sup> Premier and Governor of Bombay respectively

## § 7. Fasting

### 88 FASTING AND PRESSURE

March 18, 1918

Most probably, we shall have a settlement<sup>1</sup> today before ten. I am quite clear in my mind what it means and I see that it is something which should be quite unacceptable to me. It is my vow of fasting which is to blame. The vow is open to criticism from many points of view. This does not mean of course, that it had very little in its favour and much against it, it means that, if there was much in its favour, there was much against it too. In so far as it affected the workers, there was much in its favour and the results have been correspondingly wholesome. In so far as it bore on the mill-owners, it was open to objection and, to that extent, I have had to give in. Deny it as emphatically as I may, the people cannot but feel that the mill-owners have acted under pressure of my fast and the world at large will not believe what I say. *My weak condition left the mill-owners no freedom. It is against the principles of justice to get anything in writing from a person or make him agree to any condition or obtain anything whatever under duress. A satyagrahi will never do so. I have had, therefore, to give in on this matter. A man overpowered by a sense of shame, how much, after all, can he do?* I put forward one modest demand after another and had to be content with what they accepted gracefully. If I had insisted on our demand in full, they would have met it. But I could not at all bring myself to secure anything from them by putting

them in such a position. If I had done anything of the kind, I would have felt that I was breaking my fast by swallowing something most repulsive; how could I, who would not take even *amrit*<sup>1</sup> except at the proper hour, swallow such a thing?

I feel that some of the teachings of our sacred books are the result of profound experience. Thoreau has said that, where injustice prevails, an upright man simply cannot prosper and that, where justice prevails, such a one would experience no want. Our sacred books go even further and say that, where injustice prevails, an upright man just cannot live. That is why some amongst us withdraw from all activity. They do so not because they have grown weary of active life but simply because they find it impossible to take up any activity. They see so much of hypocrisy in the world that they cannot live in it. If an honest man finds himself surrounded on all sides by crooks, he should either turn his back on them or be as they are. In our world, some good men take to the Himalayas or the Vindhya mountains and mortify their bodies.

Some think this body to be unreal; some, believing in the immortality and omnipresence of the soul, give up their bodies on the instant and attain *moksha*. Some do return but only after having so purified themselves that, thereafter, even while living in the midst of the world's hypocrisies, they can follow their own dictates. When I compare my state with that of these illuminated souls, I am such a mere pigmy that I don't know what to say. To be sure, it is not as if I did not know the measure of my strength. But in the outside world, it is esteemed much higher than it ought to be. Every day I discover so much of hypocrisy in the world that many times I feel I just cannot go on being here. At Phoenix, I often told you that, if one day you did not find me in your midst, you should not be surprised. If this feeling comes over me, I will go where you will never be able to seek me out. In that hour, do not feel bewildered, but go on with the tasks on hand as if I were with you all the time.

'Address to Ashram inmates' (G.)

*Mahadevbhaini Diary*, Vol. IV

<sup>1</sup> The Ahmedabad mill-workers' strike ended on this date

<sup>2</sup> Mythological drink of the gods, supposed to confer immortality

## 89. THE VALUE AND ABUSE OF FASTING

May 7, 1919

Brothers and Sisters,

By *hartal*, fasting and religious devotion on Sunday next, the people propose to demonstrate to the Government in terms of *satyagraha* that it is not possible for them to bring about true contentment by force of arms. So long as the Rowlatt legislation is not withdrawn, so long as the Government continue to suppress men like Mr. Horniman who carry on innocent agitations against such acts of the Government, not only is true contentment impossible, but discontent must increase. All the world over a true peace depends not upon gunpowder but upon pure justice. When Government perpetrate injustice and fortify it by the use of arms, such acts are a sign of anger and they add injustice to injustice. If people also become angry by reason of such acts on the part of the Government, they resort to violence and the result is bad for both, mutual ill will increases. But whenever people regard particular acts of the Government as unjust and express their strong disapproval by self-suffering, the Government cannot help granting redress. This is the way of *satyagraha* and the people of Bombay will have an opportunity on Sunday next of giving expression in a clean manner to such disapproval.

A *hartal* brought about voluntarily and without pressure is a powerful means of showing popular disapproval, but fasting is even more so. When people fast in a religious spirit and thus demonstrate their grief before God, it receives a certain response. Hardest hearts are impressed by it. Fasting is regarded by all religions as a great discipline. Those who voluntarily fast become gentle and purified by it. A pure fast is a very powerful prayer. It is no small thing for *lakhs* of people voluntarily to abstain from food and such a fast is a *satyagrahi* fast. It ennobles individuals and nations. In it there should be no intention of exercising undue pressure upon the Government. But we do observe that like so many other good acts, this one of fasting too is sometimes abused. In India we often see beggars threatening to fast, fasting, or pretending to fast, until they receive what they ask for. This is *duragrahi* fasting



and the person so fasting degrades himself and it will be the proper thing to let such people fast. It is false kindness to give anything under pressure of such fasting. If it were to be otherwise, fasting may be restored to even for securing unlawful demands. Where it is a question of determining the justice or otherwise of a particular act, there is no room for any other force but that of reason regulated by the voice of conscience. The coming fast is thus in no way to be interpreted as designed to put pressure upon the Government.

M. K. GANDHI

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#### 90. FASTING AND SATYAGRAHA

[12 September 1926]

There are many forms of *satyagraha* of which fasting may or may not be one, according to the circumstances of the case. A friend has put the following poser:

A man wants to recover money another owes him. He cannot do so by going to law, as he is a non-co-operator, and the debtor in the intoxication of the power of his wealth pays him no heed, and refuses even to accept arbitration. If in these circumstances, the creditor sits *dharna* at the debtor's door, would it not be *satyagraha*? The fasting creditor seeks to injure no one by his fasting. Ever since the golden age of Rama, we have been following this method. But I am told you regard this as intimidation. If you do, will you kindly explain?

I know the correspondent. He has written from the purest motive. But I have no doubt that he is mistaken in his interpretation of *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* can never be resorted to for personal gain. If fasting with a view to recovering money is to be encouraged, there would be no end of scoundrels black-mailing people by resorting to the means. I know that many such people are to be met with in the country. It is not right

to argue that those who rightly resort to fasting need not be condemned because it is abused in a few cases. Any and everyone may not draw his own distinction between fasting— *satyagraha*— true and false. What one regards as true *satyagraha* may very likely be otherwise. *Satyagraha*, therefore, cannot be resorted to for personal gain, but only for the good of others. A *satyagrahi* should always be ready to undergo suffering and pecuniary loss. That there would not be wanting dishonest people to reap an undue advantage from the boycott of law-courts practised by good people was a contingency not unexpected at the inception of non-co-operation. It was then thought that the beauty of non-co-operation lay just in taking those risks.

But *satyagraha* in the form of fasting cannot be undertaken as against an opponent. Fasting can be resorted to only against one's nearest and dearest, and that solely for his or her good.

In a country like India, where the spirit of charity or pity is not lacking, it would be nothing short of an outrage to resort to fasting for recovering money. I know people who have given away money, quite against their will, but out of a false sense of pity. The *satyagrahi* has, therefore, to proceed warily in a land like ours. It is likely that some men may succeed in recovering money due to them by resorting to fasting, but instead of calling it a triumph of *satyagraha*, I would call it a triumph of *duragraha* or violence. The triumph of *satyagraha* consists in meeting death in the insistence on truth. A *satyagrahi* is always unattached to the attainment of the object of *satyagraha*, one seeking to recover money cannot be so unattached. I am therefore clear that fasting for the sake of personal gain is nothing short of intimidation and the result of ignorance.

'*Satyagraha— True and False*' (G.)

*Natyanvan*, 12 Sept. 1926

*Young India*, 30 Sept. 1926

## 91 FASTING AND PURITY OF SOUL

New Delhi,  
September 25, 1947

A friend writes

It seems to me that to put your life in jeopardy has become the final and natural remedy for you. Be that as it may, I cannot help thinking that the remedy is akin to keeping a patient alive by administering injections or oxygen to him.

The above reflection proceeds from pain due to affection. Nevertheless, I must say that the writer has not given much thought to his criticism. Many other well-wishers probably entertain the same hasty opinion. Hence this public discussion.

The critic's simile is inapplicable. Administration of injections or oxygen are outward remedies, calculated merely to prolong bodily existence. Therefore, they are properly described as of momentary value. Nothing will be lost if those remedies were not applied. A physical body cannot be made immortal. All that medical skill can do is to prolong the existence for a while. This temporary prolongation confers no lasting benefit.

On the other hand, fasting is never intended to affect another's body. It must affect his heart. Hence it is related to the soul. And in this sense the effect, such as it is, cannot be described as temporary. It is of a permanent character. Whether the fasting person is spiritually fit for the task and whether he has properly applied the remedy is a different matter, irrelevant to the present purpose.

Of all the fasts of which I have recollection, and of which of one only it can be said that though there was no fault in the conception, it was alloyed with external remedy with contra-indication. Had this mistake not been made, I have no doubt that its natural, beneficial result would have flown from it as in the others. I refer to the fast I had undertaken in Rajkot against the late Thakore Saheb. I saw my mistake, retraced my step and averted a dangerous crisis. The last was in Calcutta in the current month of September. Admittedly, the result was as it should have been. Having reference to the

spirit, I regard it as permanent. Time alone would show whether the effect was of a lasting character or not. It must depend upon the purity of the fasting person and the accuracy of his perception. That enquiry would be irrelevant here. Moreover, the fasting man is not competent to undertake the enquiry. It can only be done by a properly equipped impartial person and that too after my death.

'Implications of Fasting' (G.)

*Harijan*, 5 Oct 1947

## 92. FASTING AS A SPIRITUAL ACT

New Delhi,

December 10, 1947

Q 'Why does Gandhiji resort to a fast when he faces extreme difficulties? What is the effect of this action on the life of the public of India?'

A. Such a question has been put to me before but never, perhaps, precisely in the same terms. The answer, however, is easy. It is the last weapon in the armoury of the votary of *ahimsa*. When human ingenuity fails, the votary fasts. This fasting quickens the spirit of prayer, that is to say, the fasting is a spiritual act and, therefore, addressed to God. The effect of such action on the life of the people is that when the person fasting is at all known to them their sleeping conscience is awakened. But there is the danger that the people through mistaken sympathy may act against their will in order to save the life of the loved one. This danger has got to be faced. One ought not to be deterred from right action when one is sure of the rightness. It can but promote circumspection. Such a fast is undertaken in obedience to the dictates of the inner voice and, therefore, prevents haste.

'Question Box'

*Harijan*, 21 Dec 1947

## § 8. The Constructive Programme

### 93 CONSTRUCTIVE AND POLITICAL WORK

Savli,

March 3, 1936

Ramnarayanji<sup>1</sup> has passed on a letter to the President. He showed it to me, and I read it too. Then I wished to know what this committee<sup>2</sup> for Gandhian thought was, who were the persons constituting it, what were its powers and so on. Then I was informed about all that happened yesterday. I was told at the same time that this committee was not a body authorized by this session. This session does not function by passing resolutions. When the occasion arose, a suggestion was made, and then those who favoured the suggestion formed a committee. At first I felt that I should not involve myself in this matter. I felt also that since I had not been able to be present at the discussion, I was not entitled to express any opinion. Nevertheless, I do have an opinion on the subject and I consider it my duty to express it even if it should be considered an impertinence on my part. I wish to make clear to the committee its scope. If it undertakes any work, it should only be one of collecting my thoughts and beliefs. If it does anything more, I am afraid the misgivings<sup>3</sup> expressed by Ramnarayanji are bound to come true.

I have conceived nothing as Gandhism. I am not an exponent of any sect. I never claimed to have originated any philosophy. Nor am I endeavouring to do so. Several people said to me that I should write a *mr̥iti*<sup>4</sup> of Gandhian thought. I told them I could not presume to vie with the ancient law-givers. I have no such plans. The right to codify my thoughts cannot belong to me. Whatever is lasting will take shape after I am gone. Without any elaborate scheme I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal principles of truth and non-violence to our daily life and problems. Like a child I did whatever occurred to me on the spur of the moment during the course of events.

Then I realized that what I was doing were experiments in truth. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my

errors. Life has thus become for me a series of experiments in truth. In my pursuit of truth I came across the method of non-violence. By instinct I have been a votary of truth, but not non-violent. As the Muni Jinavijayaji once rightly observed, I was all for truth and was capable of sacrificing non-violence for the sake of truth. I confessed to him that it was true. For me 'there was no *dharma* higher than truth' and 'no *dharma* higher than the supreme duty of non-violence'.<sup>5</sup> The word *dharma* in my opinion has different connotations as used in the two statements. In other words, it means that there cannot be an ideal higher than truth and there cannot be any duty higher than non-violence. A man can pursue truth only by constantly adhering to this duty. There is no other means for the pursuit of truth. For the sake of truth one should not hesitate even to witness the ruin of one's country. One may even leave one's country. Paul Richard has severely criticized me in this regard. He had pointed out the difference between my ideas and those of *Manusmrithi*. I do not regard it as *dharma* to have to resort to untruth either for the sake of argument or to protect the cow. This statement is correct. However, I do not think this is a subject which can be discussed academically.

Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it Gandhism; there is no ism about it. And no elaborate literature is needed about it. All that I have written is but a description of whatever I have done. And my actions alone are the greatest exposition of truth and non-violence. Those who believe in these can propagate them only by following them in practice. They call for no books. My work is there for them to emulate. But it may be said that this, too, is not permanent. A caustic critic once observed that the spinning-wheel would be so discredited that when I died the wheels would serve to make the funeral pyre. That, however, has not shaken my faith in the spinning-wheel. I will not despair even if you all forsook me. My faith will grow all the more. Indeed, I have never despaired nor have I had to repent. I do not regret the long struggle that I have put up nor the amount of money and the number of lives lost. Whenever I went to the villages I have returned with my vessel full of hope. But how can I

convince the world that one cannot communicate this confidence with the help of books? Silent work alone can provide it. Hence no one should yield to the weakness that he would be helpless if the committee did not supply literature. The workers complain that pundits from the government and other circles go to the villagers and criticize our ideas. They misguide the people. What can we do, then, since we do not have their superior knowledge?

It is a real difficulty. But where is the need for books? 'Tell the villagers that you are there in their midst to serve them with your wheels, your brooms and buckets. Let them accept your service if they will. Must we then, you will ask, work away in silence, without bothering about our critics? Yes; I should not mind even your taking a vow of silence. Write if you feel you cannot do without it. But let not your real work suffer because you are busy writing books.

This, however, is the ideal. This committee was not so imperative. But now that it has come into being it will not be inconsistent with our work. There are no grounds for Ramnarayanji's misgivings. All we need is a little vigilance. I can understand your desire for some authoritative publications explaining the things we are striving to do. These you may have without entering into a controversy. The committee should function quietly without much ado. It will only spread poison, if it sets about to work with pomp and show. And of course it shall have to be self-supporting.

I should be satisfied if your Sangh became a register of workers who have complete faith in all activities which are a concrete expression of truth and non-violence, or rather simply of non-violence (for the practice of non-violence is impossible without acceptance of truth). Thus let no member say that he believes in truth and non-violence, but does not believe in handicrafts or *khadi* and service of the villagers therethrough, or that he believes in truth and non-violence but does not believe in Hindu-Muslim unity, or in the removal of untouchability. If you meet such a one you may tell him that it is possible that he is a believer in truth and non-violence according to his own conception, but not according to Gandhiji's conception of them, and that he cannot therefore be a member of the Sangh. Beyond this, your Sangh has no credal, regional

or institutional limitations. Your members may belong to any caste or creed, any race or nation.

I agree with the President regarding this.<sup>6</sup>

There is no need to repeat that everyone should follow the ideal of celibacy. Of course it is not possible to ride two horses at a time. Those who are not married or, though married, are living like unmarried ones can serve better. But it is not possible to have a rigid rule regarding this. Moreover, there is no need for it. It is good if we get workers who do not wish to marry but if tomorrow Gajanan or Surendra wants to get married, he can do so and still remain a member of the Sangh. If their expenses increase they can take them from the Sangh. It is a personal question. Hypocrisy and unchastity will creep in if we form a rule for it.

Some of the shortcomings shown by the President are shortcomings of the whole of India. It is necessary for us to be alert about them. Those who are worshippers of truth and non-violence and want to serve India and humanity cannot afford to be lazy. Those who waste time waste truth, non-violence and service as well. This applies to cleanliness, too. If we are alert, do not waste time and observe cleanliness, we will not be lacking in knowledge. What we call lack of knowledge is actually lack of concentration. Mother *Gita* says that one who worships with faith will automatically gain knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

The President has shown three angles.<sup>8</sup> Possession is really mental. I have a watch, a rope and an undergarment. I am possessive, if I feel unhappy without them. A person can keep a large blanket if he needs one; if he is not distressed when it is lost he is not possessive.

What the President has said<sup>9</sup> is enough. There is no need to say more.<sup>10</sup>

I see that there is a tendency to believe that these programmes are mutually exclusive or antagonistic. Much of our misunderstanding arises out of this belief. The worker in the constructive field looks down upon the political programme and *vice versa*. But really there is no such opposition. I had thought that it was clear by now to every worker that there was no absolute division between the so-called political and the so-called constructive programmes. In our method of work there are no watertight compartments. Nevertheless, I do



maintain that for the sake of efficiency it is necessary for one to confine oneself to one item at a time or such items as conveniently run together. The governor of the Bank of England exercises considerable influence on the politics of England, but he never busies himself with what are called active politics. He has hardly the time to follow the debates in the House of Commons. But he is at least as important a member in the English public life as, say, a noted member of the House of Commons. As a general rule I would suggest that the members of the Sangh should occupy themselves with work which brings no kudos and which is ordinarily not liked by workers.

We have different programmes, such as the Spinners' Association, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Village Industries Association and *goseva*, which I have not yet placed before you. But one connected with *goseva* can also become a member of the Sangh. Those who wish may even take part in more than one activity. It is a matter of one's capacity. As for me, I can attend to other things even as I work for the Charkha Sangh. Everybody cannot do the same. For example, take the Parliamentary Board.<sup>11</sup> Even this I have brought into being. But would I ever join it? Today I cannot even think of entering the Legislatures. However, it is not a matter of principle. We must do whatever may be necessary at a given time. And tomorrow, if I deem it my duty to go to the Legislature, I may very well do it. It was I who started the civil disobedience movement. But I instructed the Hindi propaganda workers in South India that they should not court imprisonment, as the work would suffer. Only Anna (Shri Harihar Sharma) from among them went to jail and that, too, with my permission. I had told Shankerlal Banker that the work of the Spinners' Association was as valuable as courting of imprisonment by thousands of men. Except for a few days in the beginning, jail-going became another name for taking rest. Those who remained outside faced a number of hardships and those who had gone to jail returned strong and sturdy. Once they went in, they violently defied the jail rules. What good did such people do by going to jail? It is a mistake to make a distinction between the constructive and the political programmes.

In my opinion, political work also is constructive work. I once wrote in *Young India* that even civil disobedience was

constructive work according to me. But from the point of view of the world, it may be described as destructive. In reality, they are two branches of *satyagraha*, and hence are akin. One cannot be complete without the other. But some people wonder how *goseva*, removal of untouchability or propagation of Hindi could be called political activities. Would these things bring *swaraj*? But it is my belief that *swaraj* cannot be attained without these. Many Congressmen, too, do not have faith in them. It is also our task to inspire such faith in them. These people do not consider these activities political. Hence, they describe them as constructive. A large number of people are ready to take to activities which they regard as political. Hence, we must consciously abide by a particular rule. The whole thing will break down if we do not observe the rule. That is the reason why the work is going on well in Gujarat. Today we have imperfect faith in these things. The plant is tender. We have to tend it with great care.

It is my belief that if we could do these four or five things well, *swaraj* is as good as in our hands. It would also increase our efficiency. I am reminded of an incident. There was some discussion about the Constructive Programme at a meeting. Sapru,<sup>12</sup> Chintamani<sup>13</sup> and Pal<sup>14</sup> were also present there. Chintamani was very critical of the Constructive Programme. Pal replied to him. He was considered my opponent; but his sharp intellect grasped the thing. Of language he was a master. He explained, much better than I could have done, that with it the prestige of the country would go up. He said we had come across something which would give us the strength that we would not derive from all our other works and all the journals. What he expressed in a beautiful language I conveyed in my uncouth language. My faith in the Constructive Programme is probably ten times what it was then.

The work of the Parliamentary Board is also my creation. But, if you wish to go to the Legislatures for this reason, I shall not allow you to do so. Today, I shall send Bhulabhai<sup>15</sup> there. He has faith in that work and he is also capable. What would I do with Satyamurti<sup>16</sup> here? If I have to attain *swaraj* through music, I would send Kharesastri<sup>17</sup> or Balkoba. And, if your faith in the Constructive Programme is deep enough, you must do only that work. Such is my faith in *goseva*. I even

dream of the cow. Let us all concentrate on our own work and our own place. Let that be our *dharma*. And even if another's *dharma* appears to be best we should understand that it is fraught with danger.

Speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh Meeting III (H)

*Gandhi Seva Sanghke Dvitiya Adhiveshan*

*Savlika Vitaran*, pp. 50-4

<sup>1</sup> Ramnarayan Chowdhury

<sup>2</sup> It was proposed that a committee for Gandhian thought be formed with D. B. Kaklikar as President and the following members: Shankar, Tryambak Dharmadhikari, Mahadev Desai, Swami Anand, Kishorelal Mashruwala, Rangarao R. Diwakar, Haribhai Upadhyay, Balubhai Mehta, Devsharma, Abhay, Rajendra Prasad, Shankarrao Deo, Raghunath Shridhar Dhotre, Satis Chandra Das Gupta, and Sitaram Purushottam Patwardhan.

<sup>3</sup> Namely: 1) Gandhism would end up by becoming one more sect; 2) It would give rise to more blind faith and intellectual dependence; 3) Differences would crop up among the Gandhians themselves with regard to the interpretation of Gandhian thought; 4) The importance of practice would decrease and undue importance would come to be attached to mere thought; 5) The evolution of Gandhian thought would slacken; 6) Gandhism would assume the form of a dogma and breed hypocrisy; 7) The bad habit of reading and writing will grow and inclination to do service would go down; 8) It would also increase Gandhi's difficulty in giving decisions on doubtful points.

<sup>4</sup> Code

<sup>5</sup> *Mahabharata*, Adiparvan, Ch. XI, V. 13 and Shantiparvan, Ch. CI, XII, V. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Kishorelal Mashruwala had said that the Sangh would comprise workers who would help the various institutions in times of need. It would propagate Gandhi's principles and would be ready to form a band of workers for a good cause. It would be a trustee of the property of the various institutions.

<sup>7</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, IV. 39.

<sup>8</sup> The President had suggested that a limit should be fixed regarding: 1) the amount of balance an institution may have at the end of a year; 2) donations it may receive; and 3) the property a worker may acquire in the name of the institution.

<sup>9</sup> That a *satyagrahi* should be firm about one thing. He should consider it his duty to help the oppressed and rouse them, make them full of life and spirit. He should resist untruth under any circumstances in spite of his superior's anger.

<sup>10</sup> Mahadev Desai here reports: One of the questions was about the compatibility or otherwise of the constructive with the political programme.

<sup>11</sup> Formed in May 1934, with M. A. Ansari as President.

<sup>12</sup> T. B. Sapru.

<sup>13</sup> C. Y. Chintamani.

<sup>14</sup> Bipin Chandra Pal.

<sup>15</sup> Bhulabhai J. Desai.

<sup>16</sup> S. Satvamaru.

<sup>17</sup> Narayan Moreswar Khare.

## 94. THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

Segaon,

January 23, 1940

Thus writes Dr Ram Manohar Lohia <sup>1</sup>

Does the Independence Pledge necessitate belief in a social order for free India which will be based exclusively on the *charkha* and the present Constructive Programme? I personally feel that it does not. The pledge is inclusive of the *charkha* and village crafts, but it is not exclusive of other industries and economic activities. Among these industries may be mentioned those of electricity, ship-building, machine-making and the like. The question of emphasis still remains. The pledge decides it only to the extent that belief in the *charkha* and village crafts as an integral part of the future social order is essential and cannot be superseded by other belief.

Does the pledge immediately necessitate abandonment of every other action except such as is based on the present Constructive Programme? I personally feel that it does not. Agitation against land rents, taxes, interest and other economic obstructions to the advance of our people appears to be permissible. It is not for instance, impossible that you should yourself decide upon a no-rent and no-tax campaign when you choose to start *satyagraha*. Whether you actually do so or not is not so important from the viewpoint of the pledge as the fact that you may do it. At any rate, agitation on economic lines is today permissible.

These two questions arise in so far as the negative aspect of the pledge is concerned. A third question arises in regard to its positive aspect. It is undoubtedly necessary that anyone who takes the pledge must be ready to express his positive faith in the principle of decentralized economy. The actual forms of this faith may, however, be decided by the march of history. Only in regard to the *charkha* it should be possible for anyone who takes the pledge to believe that the complete decentralization of the textile industry is possible and that it should be attempted.

I have not at all referred to irregularities of conduct due to indolence and similar causes, that happens in regard to all pledges and faiths. Only the wish must be there to remove these irregularities.

I do not know if this interpretation of the pledge is correct and can meet with your approval. I do not also know if my socialist comrades will approve of it. It might perhaps be worth while for the country to know soon your opinion. Perhaps it is already too late for the Independence Day.

I need hardly repeat, what I have said often, that the legal and authoritative interpretation of the pledge can only come from the Working Committee. My interpretation has as much authority as my questioners choose to give it.

On the whole I can say that I have no difficulty in accepting Dr. Lohia's interpretation.

Whatever the ultimate outcome of the Congress effort, the discussion that is going on over the pledge provides healthy political education for the public and crystallizes the opinions that rule the various schools of thought in the country.

Though I am in general agreement with Dr. Lohia, it will be well for me to give the interpretation in my own language. The pledge is not exhaustive. It represents the limit to which I could carry the Working Committee with me. If I can convert the country to my point of view, the social order of the future will be based predominantly on the *charkha* and all it implies. It will include everything that promotes the well-being of the villagers. It will not exclude the industries mentioned by my correspondent so long as they do not smother the villages and village life. I do visualize electricity, ship-building, ironworks, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto the industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the State of the future it will subserve the villages and their crafts.

I do not share the socialist belief that centralization of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare when the centralized industries are planned and owned by the State. The socialistic conception of the West was born in an environment reeking with violence. The motive lying behind the Western type and the Eastern is the same—the greatest welfare of the whole society and the abolition of the hideous inequalities resulting in the existence of millions of have-nots and a handful of haves. I believe that this end can be achieved only when non-violence is accepted by the best minds of the world as the basis on which a just social order is to be constructed. I hold that the coming into power of the proletariat through violence is bound to fail in the end. What is gained by violence must be lost before superior violence. India is within an ace of achieving the end, if only Congressmen will

be true to their creed of non-violence and live up to it. The working of the Constructive Programme is the test. Those who play upon the passions of the masses injure them and the country's cause. That they have noble motives is irrelevant. Why will not Congressmen work out the Programme fully and faithfully? It will be time to consider other programmes when we have come into our own. But like the fabled men who quarrelled over the division of the buffalo before it was bought, we argue and quarrel over our different programmes before *swaraj* has come. Decency requires that when a programme is approved by the majority all should carry it out faithfully.

Most decidedly, the pledge does not necessitate the abandonment of the other items that have hitherto adorned the Congress programme and are adverted to by Dr. Lohia. Agitation against every form of injustice is the breath of political life. My contention is that, divorced from the Constructive Programme, it is bound to have the tinge of violence

Let me illustrate my point. My experiments in *ahimsa* have taught me that non-violence in practice means common labour with the body. A Russian philosopher, Bōndaref, has called it bread labour. It means closest co-operation. The first *satyagrahis* of South Africa laboured for the common good and the common purse and felt free like birds. They included Hindus, Muslims (Shias and Sunnis), Christians (Protestants and Roman Catholics), Parsis, and Jews. They included the English and the Germans. By profession they were lawyers and architects, engineers, electricians, printers and traders. Practice of truth and non-violence melted religious differences, and we learnt to see beauty in each religion. I do not remember a single religious quarrel in the two colonies<sup>2</sup> I founded in South Africa. The common labour consisted of printing, carpentry, shoe-making, gardening, house-building, and the like. Labour was no drudgery, it was a joy. The evenings were devoted to literary pursuits. These men, women and boys were the vanguard of the *satyagraha* army. I could not wish for braver or more loyal comrades. In India the South African experience was continued and, I trust, improved upon.

Labour in Ahmedabad is by common consent the best organized in India. If it continues to work along the lines on

which it began, it will ultimately own the mills in common with the present holders. If that is not the natural outcome, its non-violence will be found to contain flaws. The peasants of Bardoli who gave Vallabhbhai the title of 'Sardar' and won their battle, and of Borsad and Kheda who did likewise, have for years been working the Constructive Programme. They have not deteriorated as *satyagrahis* by working it. I am quite certain that Ahmedabad labour and the peasantry of Bardoli and Kheda will give as good an account of themselves as any other in India if there is civil resistance.

Thirty-four years of continuous experience and experimenting in truth and non-violence have convinced me that non-violence cannot be sustained unless it is linked to conscious body labour and finds expression in our daily contact with our neighbours. This is the Constructive Programme. It is not an end, it is an indispensable means and therefore almost convertible with the end. The power of non-violent resistance can only come from honest working of the Constructive Programme.

*Ahimsa in Practice*

*Harijan* 27 Jan 1940

<sup>1</sup> 1910-6 joined the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. Secretary foreign department of the AICC 1936. <sup>2</sup> General Secretary, Punjab Socialist Party 1933-4 author of *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism* and other works.

<sup>2</sup> Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm.

## 95 CONSTRUCTIVE AND PARLIAMENTARY WORK

Sodepur,  
December 18, 1945

Dear Sister,

I was happy to read your letter. Your Hindi is not in any way inferior to mine.

Everyone should do some constructive work over and above

parliamentary work. And the aim of parliamentary work should also be to advance constructive work.

Yours,  
M K GANDHI

Shri Anasuyabai Kale  
Anand Bhavan  
Dhantoli  
Nagpur

Letter to Anasuyabai Kale (H )  
From a copy of the Hindi *Pyarelal Papers*

#### 96 UTILIZING TALENTS

April 21, 1947

The kind of work which had to be done before attaining independence was different and now that *swaraj* is on its way we need the co-operation of each and every Indian to carry on the affairs of the nation. For instance, Gijyashankar Bajpai. You do know, don't you, how in 1942 he had circulated blatant lies regarding Ba's death, not to mention those about me. But now we ought to utilize his talents. And it is being done. This is how organizations for the Constructive Programme should function. It is essential that everyone should give up past prejudices and contribute one's mite in laying the foundation of a strong country. That is why I wanted <sup>1</sup> to be taken on the Board of Trustees.

'A Letter' (G )

*Bihari Kanti Agman*, pp 236-7

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Saralabehn Subbhan



## 97. NEED FOR BOLD CONSTRUCTIVE WORKERS

May 13, 1947

Independence is now as good as come. But it is only political independence. Let not anyone think that once the British quit India there will be more comfort and convenience and the Constructive Programme would become superfluous. But from the prevailing atmosphere it seems that for at least a decade after independence our condition would continue to deteriorate. This political freedom no doubt will remove the restraints over us and we shall be able to accomplish our cherished aims. Real hard work will have to be done only after independence. Unless poverty and unemployment are wiped out from India, I would not agree that we have attained freedom. Real wealth does not consist in jewellery and money but in providing for proper food, clothes, education, and creating healthy conditions of living for every one of us. A country can be called prosperous and free only when its citizens can easily earn enough to meet their needs. But today the situation is so tragic that on the one hand there are people who roll in pomp and luxury and on the other there are people who do not have enough clothes to cover their bodies and who live on the brink of starvation. Today men are sitting idle having no work to do. A man should have full opportunity to develop himself. That will happen only when there is an awakening among the constructive workers.

The country does need politicians. But now when it is necessary to work hard for the prosperity of the country we need devoted constructive workers. I am convinced that people who are wedded to machinery are going to be disillusioned. Everyone, if only after being disillusioned, will have to ply the *charkha*. One has to be self-reliant in everything. If people do not start working of their own free will, time and circumstances will make them do so. But right now I find it suffocating to see the manner in which we are marching towards freedom. I find no light anywhere. Now that the British are contemplating transfer of power every community is keen on grabbing it. But, if we do not do our duty, we will be giving a chance for the people to say that slavery was better than this freedom. To the extent the constructive workers are bold

and fearless, these qualities would be reflected in their actions and through their work spread in the atmosphere. If the nation breathes such a healthy air, it would definitely grow healthy. So, the time has come for every constructive worker to gird up his loins and plunge into action. Let him put this moment to good use and justify the life God has granted him.

‘Advice to Constructive Workers’ (G )

*Bihami Komi Agman*, pp 346-7

## III

# *Swaraj*—Freedom and Self-Rule

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### § 1. Freedom and Liberty

#### 98. LIBERTY AND ITS USURPATION

Liberty consists in being able to obey our own will and conscience rather than the will and conscience of others. – Lord Hugh Cecil at the Edinburgh University Associated Societies.

It has often been said that the struggle at present going on in the Transvaal is a fight for liberty. Judging it according to the definition quoted above, our countrymen in the Transvaal are truly fighting for liberty and that should, therefore, command universal sympathy. Lord Hugh Cecil, in elaborating the definition he gave, said:

The true ground for maintaining liberty is that, without it, there cannot be in any true sense virtue or righteousness. Virtue does not consist in doing right, but in choosing to do right. This is the great distinction between the animal and man.

The Transvaal Indians are exercising the power to obey their will and conscience rather than the will of the State which is in conflict with theirs. Any man who subordinates his will to that of the State surrenders his liberty and thus becomes a slave. The Asiatic Act imposes slavery on Indians in that it deprives them of liberty, i.e., the ability to obey their conscience.

From His Lordship's remarks, it further follows that men cannot be made virtuous by Acts of Parliament. If they are compelled to do an act which is considered good, they are no more to be credited with virtue than a donkey who is compelled to carry a load.

Passive resisters in the Transvaal are, then, fighting for the

liberty of the whole of South Africa in offering battle to the most powerful South African State. A handful though they are, they have a great and clear mission before them. And they have every reason to be proud of their record.

Lord Hugh Cecil, while giving us a scientific definition of liberty, does not tell us how we are to achieve it. If liberty be ability to act according to the dictates of our conscience, we certainly cannot achieve it by force of arms, i.e., by physical violence. It is attainable only by suffering in our own persons until our opponents see the error of their ways and cease to harass us by trying to impose their will on us. Such a method of fighting, and no other, is the natural corollary of the definition. Any other method of gaining liberty is a usurpation.

‘Liberty’

*Indian Opinion*, 8 Jan. 1910

#### 99. FREEDOM AND SPIRITUAL FORCE

Mr. Gregg sends me the following extracts from a written address by Thomas Paine to the soldiers of General George Washington’s American Army in the Revolutionary War, December 1776, fighting against the British for the freedom of the thirteen American Colonies:

‘These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it *now* deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap we esteem too lightly; ’tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as *Freedom* should not be highly rated. . .

I once felt all that kind of anger, which a man ought to feel against the mean principles that are held by the Tories: a noted one, who kept a tavern at Amboy, was standing at his door, with as pretty a child in his hand, about eight or nine years old, as I ever saw, and after speaking his mind as freely as he thought was pru-

dent, finished with this unfatherly expression, 'Well, give me peace in my day.' Not a man lives on the continent but fully believes that a separation must some time or other finally take place, and a generous parent should have said, 'If there must be trouble, let it be in my day that my child may have peace', and this single reflection, well applied, is sufficient to awaken every man to duty. Not a place upon earth might be so happy as America. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling world, and she has nothing to do but to trade with them. . . .

I call not upon a few, but upon all, not on this state or that state, but on *every* state; up and help us; lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not that thousands are gone, turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but '*show your faith by your works*' that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home countries and back, the rich and the poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made *them* happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. . . .

There are cases which cannot be overdone by language, and this is one. There are persons too who see not the full extent of the evil which threatens them; they solace themselves with hopes that the enemy, if he succeed, will be merciful. It is the madness of folly to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice; and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war; the cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf, and we ought to guard equally against both.

It is remarkable how similar are the qualities required of soldiers of peace and soldiers of war. Thomas Paine's speech could be addressed almost word for word and with complete appropriateness to the Congress volunteers of 1921 who enrolled under the Ahmedabad Congress pledge of complete non-violence in thought, word and deed. Whether you secure

freedom by the use of physical force or spiritual force, i.e., through self-suffering, the price to be paid must be heavy, if it is to be a valuable article. Bravery and perseverance in the face of odds are as necessary, if not more, to the man of the spirit as to the man of the sword. Whether we will win *swaraj* by violent means or non-violent, we shall have to discard ease and comfort, not to speak of luxuries. Pratap reduced himself to penury for the sake of what he believed to be freedom. Prahlad delivered his body for free destruction for what he believed to be his freedom. But there are among us not a few who would gain *swaraj* for a song. Thomas Paine tells us that such a thing is not possible.

‘Price of Freedom’

*Young India*, 9 Dec. 1926

#### 100 INWARD AND OUTWARD FREEDOM

‘FREEDOM TO THE FREE’

Whilst we are cutting one another’s throats in the name of religion and some of us running to the Statutory Commission<sup>1</sup> in the vain hope of getting freedom, a friend sends me the following from James Allen to remind us that even in the land of so-called freedom, the real freedom has still to come. Here is the passage:

All outward oppression is but the shadow and effect of the real oppression within. For ages the oppressed have cried for liberty, and a thousand man-made statutes have failed to give it to them. They can give it only to themselves, they shall find it only in obedience to the Divine Statutes which are inscribed upon their hearts. Let them resort to the inward freedom and the shadow of oppression shall no more darken the earth. Let men cease to oppress themselves, and no man shall oppress his brother. Men legislate for an outward freedom, yet continue to render such freedom impossible of achievement by fostering an inward condition of enslavement. They thus pursue a shadow without and ignore the substance within. All outward forms of bondage and oppression will cease to be when man ceases to be the willing bond-slave of passion, error, and ignorance.

The outward freedom therefore that we shall attain will only be in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment. And if this is the correct view of freedom, our chief energy must be concentrated upon achieving reform from within. In this much-needed work all who will can take an equal share. We need neither to be lawyers, nor legislators, to be able to take part in the great effort. When this reform takes place on a national scale no outside power can stop our onward march.

Notes<sup>1</sup>

*Young India* 1 Nov. 1928 (G)

*Naijwan* 4 Nov. 1928 (G)

<sup>1</sup> Simon Commission

#### 101 SELF-DEPENDENCE AND INTERDEPENDENCE

Sjt Jethalal Govindji writes from Bijolia (Rajputana)

It may not be possible for me to leave this place for another six months. Even so about 6000 people at the least are today spinning their own yarn. Most of them weave their own cloth. But the question of dyeing is a great stumbling-block. Red, yellow and pink colours are a great necessity. Today we have to depend on foreign dyes. If this dependence continues, the exploiting spirit of the middlemen is likely to betray us and drive people to the bazaar to purchase their coloured cloth. To consolidate the *khadi* work already done, it will be necessary to teach people the use of indigenous dyes. Some way out of the difficulty must be found and suggestions in this behalf may be invited from the readers of *Young India* and *Naijwan*. Unless this is done there can be no ending of our present helpless state.

I see no reason why it should not be possible to place home-made dyes within the easy reach of all and I hope that those who know this art will co-operate toward this end. But I cannot help uttering a warning to *khadi* lovers like Sjt Jethalal. He has set before him an ambitious ideal that did not obtain in our country probably at any time even in the past.

The cultivator had always to depend for certain necessities of life on the middleman and it seems to me that this is just as it should be. Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency.

Man is a social being. Without inter-relation with society he cannot realize his oneness with the universe or suppress his egotism. His social interdependence enables him to test his faith and to prove himself on the touchstone of reality. If man were so placed or could so place himself as to be absolutely above all dependence on his fellow-beings, he would become so proud and arrogant as to be a veritable burden and nuisance to the world. Dependence on society teaches him the lesson of humility. That a man ought to be able to satisfy most of his essential needs himself is obvious; but it is no less obvious to me that when self-sufficiency is carried to the length of isolating oneself from society it almost amounts to sin. A man cannot become self-sufficient even in respect of all the various operations from the growing of cotton to the spinning of the yarn. He has at some stage or other to take the aid of the members of his family. And if one may take help from one's own family why not from one's neighbours? Or otherwise what is the significance of the great saying, 'The world is my family'?

Deep at the root of Sjt Jethalal's distress I find a lurking distrust of the dye-sellers. Why should it be taken for granted that the middlemen are bound to betray us? The *khadi* movement stands for an all-round purification. It requires us to establish contact with every sphere of social life and to exercise a purifying influence. We do not want to take away from the middleman his occupation, but only to give a new orientation to it and to change his mental outlook. We must have an abiding faith in the middlemen, and in their developing one day a high sense of business morality and a burning patriotism. Even today instances of such ideal businessmen are not lacking.

Fanatical excess is a thing always to be shunned. The 'middle path' is the royal road. Self-dependence is a necessary ideal so long as and to the extent that it is an aid to one's self-respect and spiritual discipline. It becomes an obsession and a hindrance when it is pushed beyond that limit. On the



other hand interdependence when it is not inconsistent with one's self-respect is necessary to bring home to man the lesson of humility and the omnipotence of God. One must strike a golden mean between these two extremes. A fanaticism that refuses to discriminate is the negation of all ideals.

'Our Helplessness' (G.)

*Navajwan*, 24 Feb. 1929

*Young India*, 21 Mar. 1929

## 102. FREEDOM AND SELF-CONTROL

Some Digambar<sup>1</sup> Jains have asked the Sardar how, in the face of the Congress resolution passed at Karachi regarding fundamental rights and duties, assuring religious freedom under *swaraj*, anyone can object to Digambar Jain *sadhus* roaming about naked in accordance with their religion. The Sardar had replied that religious freedom could not imply that an act which appeared indecent to many or hurts their feelings was permissible. And he had said it was his opinion that despite being *sadhus*, if they went about naked, it was bound to hurt people's feelings.

I feel that the Sardar could have possibly given no other reply. I myself believe that the ideal state for all human beings is nakedness. But an ideal human being would always be innocent and free of passions or desires. Without such innocence, anyone roaming about naked would be regarded as a sinful man.

There is no reason to conclude that because Digambar *sadhus* are known as *sadhus* they would necessarily be free of all passions. Even if they are so, it is their *dharma* to keep within the bounds of social decency. A few Jains may understand the state of these *sadhus*. But society by and large will fail to comprehend it and its feelings will be hurt. These naked *sadhus* have no need to visit cities. If they have, they should observe the minimum bounds of decency prescribed for citizens. Instead of doing that if they insist upon entering cities in a naked state, or if the *shravakas*<sup>2</sup> insist upon this, in my opinion it

would be regarded as *adharma*.<sup>3</sup> I myself am fond of the state of nakedness. If I were living in a lonely forest I would remain in that state, but in this world full of passions, there is little likelihood of this becoming the commonly accepted practice. For the preservation of morality even great men of every persuasion have to cover their private parts; it is their *dharma* to do so.

Freedom, both individual and religious, has always had and will always have many limits. Religion does not hanker after rights, it hungers for restraints and restrictions. Anyone who knows religion and practises it does not think in terms of his rights. Nudity cannot be one's duty. It is one's duty to abandon all possessions. That is a *dharma* of the mind. If anyone puts any burden on me, that is not possession. But it becomes so if I start enjoying that burden. The *sadhu* who bears the burden of the loin-cloth for the preservation of the social order does not violate the principle of non-possession but rather exercises self-control. The *sadhu* who insists upon going about naked without worrying about the feelings of society is self-willed. The following dictum of the *Gita* is pertinent in this context: 'For me there is naught to do in the three worlds, yet I am ever in action. If I were not to perform my task, these worlds would be ruined; I should be the cause of chaos and of the end of all mankind.' *Sadhus* should not do anything which would harm the people. Let society never encourage them to do so.

'Limits to Freedom' (G.)

*Navajivan*, 31 May 1931

<sup>1</sup> Literally, those who regard the sky as their garment.

<sup>2</sup> Lay followers of Jainism

<sup>3</sup> Violation of *dharma*.

## 103. MODERATION AND FREEDOM

March 20, 1932

Chi.,

It is true that in many places people take more freedom than is proper. Such things always happen whenever there is popular awakening. Self-control cannot be forced on anybody. We should be strict in our own conduct and be liberal towards others. What we regard as excessive freedom may, however, be moderation for those concerned. One person may take milk as medicine and another may consume it to pamper himself. Such things happen every day

Blessings from  
BAPU

'A Letter' G )  
CW 8979

## 104. INDEPENDENCE AND DECENTRALIZATION

Panchgani  
July 21, 1946

Q You have said in your article in the *Harjan* of July 15, under the caption 'The Real Danger', that Congressmen in general certainly do not know the kind of independence they want. Would you kindly give them a broad but comprehensive picture of the Independent India of your own conception?

A. I do not know that I have not, from time to time, given my idea of Indian independence. Since, however, this question is part of a series, it is better to answer it even at the risk of repetition.

Independence of India should mean independence of the whole of India, including what is called India of the States and the other foreign powers, French and Portuguese, who are there. I presume, by British sufferance. Independence must mean that of the people of India, not of those who are today ruling over them. The rulers should depend on the will

of those who are under their heels. Thus, they have to be servants of the people, ready to do their will.

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living Force which inheres every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We

must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

Q Do you believe that the proposed Constituent Assembly could be used for the realization of your picture?

A The Constituent Assembly has all the possibilities for the realization of my picture. Yet I cannot hope for much, not because the State Paper holds no such possibilities but because the document, being wholly of a voluntary nature, requires the common consent of the many parties to it. These have no common goal. Congress men themselves are not of one mind even on the contents of Independence. I do not know how many swear by non-violence, the *charkha* or, believing in decentralization, regard the village as the nucleus. I know on the contrary that many would have India become a first-class military power and wish for India to have a strong centre and build the whole structure round it. In the medley of these conflicts I know that if India is to be leader in clean action based on clean thought, God will confound the wisdom of these big men and will provide the villages with the power to express themselves as they should.

Q If the Constituent Assembly fizzles out because of the 'danger from within', as you have remarked in the above-mentioned article,

would you advise the Congress to accept the alternative of general country-wide strike and capture of power, either non-violently or with the use of necessary force? What is your alternative in that eventuality if the above is not approved by you?

A. I must not contemplate darkness before it stares me in the face. And in no case can I be party, irrespective of non-violence, to a universal strike and capture of power. Though, therefore, I do not know what I should do in the case of a breakdown, I know that the actuality will find me ready with an alternative. My sole reliance being on the living Power which we call God, He will put the alternative in my hands when the time has come, not a minute sooner.

‘Independence’

*Harijan*, 28 July 1946

#### 105. FREEDOM FROM FOREIGN DOMINATION

Gandhi Camp, Patna,  
April 19, 1947

The foreign power will be withdrawn before long, but for me real freedom will come only when we free ourselves of the domination of Western education, Western culture and Western way of living which have been ingrained in us, because this culture has made our living expensive and artificial, both for men and for women. Emancipation from this culture would mean real freedom for us.

‘Talk with Englishwomen’ (G.)

*Bihari Koni Agman*, pp. 226-7

#### 106. NO REAL FREEDOM WITHOUT SELF-DENIAL

June 5, 1947

It is very difficult practically impossible -- to achieve real freedom without self-denial. Nobody had ever dreamt in those

days that our sacrifices would be materially rewarded. But today we are engaged in a race for positions of power. What a misfortune! Shall I describe it as my own tragedy, the tragedy of our soldiers of truth and *ahimsa*? You may take it either way you like. That, however, is the state of affairs today.

A Letter' (G)

*Bihar Pachhi Dilhi* p 73

## § 2 The Ideal and Goal of *Swaraj*

### 107 SWARAJ AND FEARLESSNESS

I have been collecting descriptions of *swaraj*. One of these would be *swaraj* is the abandonment of the fear of death. A nation which allows itself to be influenced by the fear of death cannot attain *swaraj*, and cannot retain it if somehow attained.

English people carry their lives in their pockets. Arabs and Pathans consider death as nothing more than an ordinary ailment, they never weep when a relation dies. Boer women are perfectly innocent of this fear. In the Boer war thousands of young Boer women became widows, but they never cared. It did not matter in the least if the husband or the son was lost, it was enough and more than enough that the country's honour was safe. What booted the husband if the country was enslaved? It was infinitely better to bury a son's mortal remains and to cherish his immortal memory than to bring him up as a serf. Thus did the Boer women steel their hearts and cheerfully give up their darlings to the angel of death.

The people I have mentioned kill and get killed. But what of those who do not kill but are only ready to die themselves? Such people become the objects of a world's adoration. They are the salt of the earth.

The English and the Germans fought one another, they killed and got killed. The result is that animosities have increased. There is no end of unrest and the present condition

of Europe is pitiful. There is more of deceit, and each is anxious to circumvent the rest.

But the fearlessness which we are cultivating is of a nobler and purer order, and it is therefore that we hope to achieve a signal victory within a very short time.

When we attain *swaraj*, many of us will have given up the fear of death; or else we shall not have attained *swaraj*. Till now mostly young boys have died in the cause. Those who died in Aligadh were all below twenty-one. No one knew who they were. If Government resort to firing now, I am hoping that some men of the first rank will have the opportunity of offering up the supreme sacrifice.

Why should we be upset when children or young men or old men die? Not a moment passes when some one is not born or is not dead in this world. We should feel the stupidity of rejoicing in a birth and lamenting a death. Those who believe in the soul—and what Hindu, Mussalman, or Parsi is there who does not—know that the soul never dies. The souls of the living as well as of the dead are all one. The eternal processes of creation and destruction are going on ceaselessly. There is nothing in it for which we might give ourselves up to joy or sorrow. Even if we extend the idea of relationship only to our countrymen and take all the births in the country as taking place in our own family, how many births shall we celebrate? If we weep for all the deaths in our country, the tears in our eyes would never dry. This train of thought should help us to get rid of all fear of death.

India, they say, is a nation of philosophers; and we have not been unwilling to appropriate the compliment. Still hardly any other nation becomes so helpless in the face of death as we do. And in India again, no other community betrays so much of this helplessness as the Hindus. A single birth is enough for us to be beside ourselves with ludicrous joyfulness. A death makes us indulge in orgies of loud lamentation which condemn the neighbourhood to sleeplessness for the night. If we wish to attain *swaraj*, and if having attained it, wish to make it something to be proud of, we must perfectly renounce this unseemly fright.

And what is imprisonment to the man who is fearless of death itself? If the reader will think it out a little, he will find



that if *swaraj* is delayed, it is delayed because we are not prepared calmly to meet death and inconveniences lesser than death.

As larger and larger numbers of innocent men come out to welcome death, their sacrifice will become the potent instrument for the salvation of all others; and there will be a minimum of suffering. Suffering cheerfully endured ceases to be suffering and is transmuted into an ineffable joy. The man who flies from suffering is the victim of endless tribulation before it has come to him and is half dead when it does come. But one who is cheerfully ready for anything and everything that comes escapes all pain; his cheerfulness acts as an anaesthetic.

I have been led to write about this subject, because we have got to envisage even death if we will have *swaraj* this very year. One who is previously prepared often escapes accidents; and this may well be the case with us. It is my firm conviction that *swadeshi* constitutes this preparation. When our *swadeshi* is a success, neither this Government nor anyone else will feel the necessity of putting us to any further test.

Still it is best not to neglect any contingency whatever. Possession of power makes men blind and deaf; they cannot see things which are under their very nose, and cannot hear things which invade their ears. There is thus no knowing what this power-intoxicated Government may not do. So it seemed to me that patriotic men ought to be prepared for death, imprisonment and similar troubles.

The brave meet death with a smile on their lips but they are circumspect all the same. There is no room for foolhardiness in this non-violent war. We do not propose to go to jail or to die by an immoral act. We must mount the gallows while resisting the oppressive laws of this Government.

'The Fear of Death' (G)  
*Young India*, 13 Oct. 1921

108. *SWARAJ*, MORAL AUTHORITY, AND EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

During last month I had a hearty discussion with an English friend who takes deep interest in matters Indian and who is anxious to serve India to the best of his ability. He asked me whether I would publish the gist of our conversation. I readily agreed but asked him to jot down the points he raised which he gladly did. I do not disclose the friend's name as the name does not matter. It is my views that matter because they are exciting some interest at the present moment. If I am a friend of Englishmen, as I claim to be, I must patiently answer all the doubts that may arise in their minds. The English friend put the questions not all on his own behalf but mostly on behalf of those Englishmen who had originally raised them.

Here are the questions with answers.

What is the real purpose of your insistence upon the *khaddar* programme as a means of obtaining *swaraj*?

I am interested in the attainment of *swaraj* only by non-violent and truthful means. This is possible only through a diligent and successful prosecution of the *khaddar* programme. *Swaraj* can be peacefully attained only if the whole Indian mass work as with one will, be it on ever so little a constructive and useful thing for ever so little a time. Such an effort presupposes national consciousness. This is possible only through the spinning-wheel. It is not remunerative enough for individuals. It is therefore not enough incentive for an individual selfishly inclined. It is however enough to raise at a bound the national prosperity in an appreciable manner. An increase of one rupee per head per year may mean nothing to the individual. But Rs. 5,000/- in a village containing a population of as many would mean the payment of land revenue or other dues. Thus the spinning-wheel means national consciousness and a contribution by every individual to a definite constructive national work.

If India can demonstrate her capacity for such an achievement by voluntary effort she is ready for political *swaraj*. Any lawful demand of a nation with a will of its own must prove irresistible. I have hitherto said nothing of the immense eco-

conomic value of the wheel and its product *khaddar*. For it is obvious. The economic prosperity of India must indirectly affect the course of her political history- even using the word 'political' in its narrow sense. Lastly, when the exploitation of India by Lancashire ceases by reason of the ability of India through the wheel to clothe herself and consequently to exclude foreign cloth and therefore also Lancashire cloth, England will have lost the feverish anxiety at any cost to hold India under subjection

This means revolutionizing the national taste? Do you expect to persuade your countrymen to give up the use of foreign cloth?

I do. After all I am asking for very little. Millions are indifferent as to what they wear. They merely look to the cheapness of the articles they buy. It is the middle class whose taste has to be revised. I do not think that the substitution of foreign cloth by *khaddar* is an impossible task for them. Moreover it should be remembered that nowadays it is possible for *khaddar* to suit a large variety of tastes. And improvement in fineness is making steady progress. I am therefore of opinion that if any constructive work is capable of success, it is the *khaddar* programme

What do you mean by *swaraj* and what are its limitations (if any)?

By *swaraj* I mean the Government of India by the consent of the people ascertained by the vote of the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-born or domiciled who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters. This Government should be quite consistent with the British connection on absolutely honourable and equal terms. Personally I have not despaired of the substitution for the present servile condition of equal partnership or association. But I would not for one moment hesitate to countenance or bring about complete severance if it became necessary, i.e., if the connection impeded India's full growth.

To what extent are you committed to the programme and methods of the Swaraj Party?

I am personally committed neither to the programme nor to the methods of the Swaraj Party. As a Congressman I recognize its undoubted influence in the country and therefore its right to represent the Congress—a right which it now enjoys by arrangement but which it otherwise might have secured by a party vote.

What are the relations between you and the leaders of that party?

They are of a most cordial character. I give them the same credit for patriotic service and sacrifice that I would like to claim for myself.

It has been stated that you have surrendered to Mr. Das?

The statement is true in the sense that I have avoided a quarrel among Congressmen. But it is not true if it is intended to convey the meaning that I have surrendered an iota of my principles.

Was not your attitude on the Saha resolution<sup>1</sup> different from the one you have now adopted?

Not in the least. At the time of the Saha resolution I was opposing an internal error. At the present moment I am resisting external oppression based on erroneous assumptions. Moreover, my attempt then to secure consistency of conduct and control of the Congress executive by one party must not be confused with my action on the Saha resolution. The two things were totally different and were not even inter-related. As soon as I discovered that the attempt to secure unity of control led to bad blood, I retraced my steps and declared complete surrender to the Swaraj Party.

It has been stated that you have lost your moral authority by your surrender ?

Moral authority is never retained by any attempt to hold on to it. It comes without seeking and is retained without effort. I am not conscious of loss of moral authority, for I am

utterly unconscious of being guilty of any single act compromising my moral conduct. What I have undoubtedly lost is the intellectual co-operation of a large number of educated men in my presentation of the means of attaining *swaraj*, e.g., the spinning-wheel.

Why do you insist upon non-co-operation while every one of the activities has failed? What is the purpose in speaking of its suspension?

I do not insist now. But I do not admit that every one of the activities has failed. On the contrary, every activity of non-co-operation succeeded to an extent. I can speak only of its suspension because to me non-cooperation is a vital principle of life and because in my opinion it had done India and, if you will, the world an amount of good of which, at present, we have not adequate conception and also because, if I found an atmosphere of substantial non-violence and real co-operation among the people and if the end remained still unattained, I should not hesitate to advise its resumption by the nation

How do you propose to solve the Hindu Muslim problem?

By constantly insisting upon both the communities cultivating mutual respect and trust and by insisting upon Hindus surrendering out of strength to the Mussalman in every mundane matter and by showing that those who claim to be nationalists and are in an overwhelming majority should stand out in any unseemly competition for legislative or administrative control. I hope also to achieve the end by demonstrating that real *swaraj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, *swaraj* is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

What is your own real attitude towards the English and your hope about England?

My attitude towards the English is one of utter friendliness

and respect. I claim to be their friend, because it is contrary to my nature to distrust a single human being or to believe that any nation on earth is incapable of redemption. I have respect for Englishmen, because I recognize their bravery, their spirit of sacrifice for what they believe to be good for themselves, their cohesion and their powers of vast organization. My hope about them is that they will at no distant date retrace their steps, revise their policy of exploitation of undisciplined and ill-organized races and give tangible proof that India is an equal friend and partner in the British Commonwealth to come. Whether such an event will ever come to pass will largely depend upon our own conduct. That is to say I have hope of England because I have hope of India. We will not for ever remain disorganized and imitative. Beneath the present disorganization, demoralization and lack of initiative I can discover organization, moral strength and initiative forming themselves. A time is coming when England will be glad of India's friendship and India will disdain to reject the proffered hand because it has once despoiled her. I know that I have nothing to offer in proof of my hope. It is based on an immutable faith. And it is a poor faith that is based on proof commonly so-called

'Interrogatories Answered'

*Young India*, 29 Jan. 1925

<sup>1</sup> Passed by the Bengal Provincial Conference, paying homage to the 'patriotism' of Gopinath Saha who had murdered Ernest Davis

#### 109. SWARAJ AND COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

December 28, 1926<sup>1</sup>

You are seeking to inculcate a spirit of complete independence among those who are divided amongst themselves. A wise man does not attempt to take a bigger bite than he can digest. Supposing complete independence was something infinitely superior to *swaraj*, even then I suggest to you to be patient and attain what is possible at the present moment and then mount further steps. One step is now enough for me, but

coming to the rock-bottom, I suggest to you that *swaraj* includes complete independence, and because it included this, Mr. Jinnah and Pandit Malaviya resisted it, and Mr. Jinnah even went out. We want to make it absolutely clear that we want to remain within the Empire if it may be possible. Why do you lose all faith in human nature and in yourself? Why do you lose faith in your ability to bend down the haughtiness of the Englishmen and make them serve you? If you have repugnance against the white skin, do you want to drive away every Englishman and not keep any, even for teaching you English? Take the instance of South Africa; there is that haughty nation the Dutch Boer. Even they do not bring in such a resolution. General Hertzog has returned from London completely converted. He knows, if he wants to declare independence today he can get it. I shall not be satisfied with any constitution that we may get from the British Parliament unless it leaves that power with us also. So that if we choose to declare independence we could do so. Do not impair the effect that the word carries. Do not limit its interpretation. Who knows, somebody may give us a still better definition. The potency of the word increases because it is undefined and is, I would say, undefinable.

Speech at Congress Session, Gauhati  
*The Searchlight*, 2 Jan. 1927

<sup>1</sup> Gandhi was speaking on the Independence Resolution in the Subjects Committee

#### III. EVOLUTION OF SWARAJ

Year after year a resolution is moved in the Congress to amend the Congress creed so as to define *swaraj* as complete independence and year after year happily the Congress throws out the resolution by an overwhelming majority. The rejection of the resolution is proof of the sanity of the Congress. The moving of the resolution betrays the impatience (pardonable in the circumstances) of some ardent Congressmen who have lost all faith in the British intentions and who think that the British

Government will never render justice to India. The advocates of independence forget that they betray want of faith in human nature and therefore in themselves. Why do they think that there can never be change of heart in those who are guiding the British people? Is it not more correct and more dignified to own that there is no change of heart because we are weak? Nature abhors weakness. We want from the British people and the world at large not mercy but justice that is our due. And justice will come when it is deserved by our being and feeling strong.

I am sure that the staunchest votary of independence does not mean that he will not have any British association on any terms whatsoever. Even when he says so, he means, as one of the supporters of the resolution admitted in answer to my question, that the British people will never accept association on equal terms. This is totally different from rejecting British association on any terms.

Indeed the word *swaraj* is all-embracing. It does include complete independence as it includes many other things. To give it one definite meaning is to narrow the outlook, and to limit what is at present happily limitless. Let the content of *swaraj* grow with the growth of national consciousness and aspirations. We may be satisfied today with dominion status. The future generations may not be, may want something better. *Swaraj* without any qualifying clause includes that which is better than the best one can conceive or have today. *Swaraj* means even under dominion status a capacity to declare independence at will. So long as we have not achieved that capacity, we have no *swaraj*. This is the least it should mean. South Africa has achieved that status today. It is a partnership at will of free peoples. Between Britain and the Dominions there is a partnership at will on terms of equality and for mutual benefit. What India will finally have is for her and her alone to determine. This power of determination remains unfettered by the existing creed. What therefore the creed does retain is the possibility of evolution of *swaraj* within the British Empire or call it the British Commonwealth. The cryptic meaning of *swaraj* I have often described to be within the Empire if possible, without if necessary. I venture to think that it is not possible to improve upon that conception. It is



totally consistent with national self-respect and it provides for the highest growth of the nation.

After all, the real definition will be determined by our action, the means we adopt to achieve the goal. If we would but concentrate upon the means, *swaraj* will take care of itself. Our exploration should, therefore, take place in the direction of determining not the definition of an indefinable term like *swaraj* but in discovering the ways and means

‘Independence’

*Young India*, 13 Jan 1927

### III. SELF-RULE AND SELF-GOVERNMENT

November 22, 1927

I thank you for the words that you have spoken about myself, and I thank you also for the pleasant reminder that you have given me of the ancient times when the connection between India and Ceylon was established. I do not propose, however, to take up your time by giving my own views upon what that connection means to India, means to you, and shall I say to the world. But I will say this that in my opinion the teaching of Gautama Buddha was not a new religion. In so far as I have been able to study those lofty teachings, I have come to the conclusion — and that conclusion I arrived long before now

that Gautama was one of the greatest of Hindu reformers, and that he left upon the people of his own time and upon the future generations an indelible impress of that reformation. But it would be wrong on my part to take up your time and my own, limited as it is, to consider that very fascinating subject. I therefore come to mundane matters relating to the Congress.

In India the Congress is a word to conjure with. It is an association with an unbroken record of over 40 years. And it enjoys today a reputation which no other political association in India enjoys, and that is, in spite of the many ups and downs which the Congress in common with all worldly insti-

tutions and associations has gone through. I therefore take it for granted that in adopting this name you are also, as far as may be and is necessary, following the traditions of the parent body, if I may call the National Congress of India by that name. And on that assumption I venture this afternoon to place before you my views of what a Congress should be, or how the National Congress in India has been able to build up its reputation. I know that after all my connection with the Congress in India does not stretch over a period longer than 10 years or I may now say, more accurately speaking, 12 years. But as you are aware that 12 years' association is so close, and I have been so much identified with the Congress that probably what I may say might be taken with some degree of authority. But in one way my association with the parent body is nearly 30 years old now.

It was in South Africa in the year 1893 when I went there that I dreamt about the Congress. I knew something about its activities, though I had never attended a single one of the annual sessions of that great institution. Just like you, as a youngster, I took my proper share in founding an association called the Natal Indian Congress after the fashion of the Indian National Congress, making such changes as were necessary to suit the local conditions. I shall therefore be able to give you the results of my experience of public life in connection with such institutions dating back to 1893. And what I learnt even so early as 1894 was that any such association, to be really serviceable, to deserve the name of being called 'national', requires a fair measure of self-sacrifice on the part of the principal workers. I have no hesitation in confessing to you that that ideal I found to be very difficult to put into practice even in that little community, because we were after all a very small body of men and women in Natal, which is the smallest province of South Africa, where we had a population of nearly 60 thousand Indians of whom the vast majority had no vote in the deliberations of the Congress.

The Congress, however, was a representative institution and fully representative of things that interested the people, because it constituted itself the trustee of the welfare of those men. But I must not linger over the history of that institution.

Even in that small body we found bickerings and a desire more for power than for service, a desire more for self-aggrandizement than for self-effacement, and I have found during my 12 years' association with the parent body also that there is a continuous desire for self-seeking and self-aggrandizement; and for you as for us who are still striving to find our feet, who have still to make good the claims for self-expression and self-government, self-sacrifice, self-effacement, and self-suppression are really absolutely necessary and indispensable for our existence and for our progress.

I do not profess to have studied your politics during the brief stay that I have made here, I do not know the internal working of this organization, I do not know how strong it is, and how popular it is. I only hope it is strong and is popular. I hope you are free from the blemishes that I have just mentioned. It is, I know, a pleasurable pastime (and I have indulged in it sufficiently as you know) to strive against the powers that be, and to wrestle with the government of the day, especially when that government happens to be a foreign government and a government under which we rightly feel we have not that scope which we should have, and which we desire, for expansion and fullest self-expression. But I have also come to the conclusion that self-expression and self-government are not things which may be either taken from us by anybody or which can be given us by anybody.

It is quite true that if those who happen to hold our destinies, or seem to hold our destinies in their hands, are favourably disposed, are sympathetic, understand our aspirations, no doubt it is then easier for us to expand. But after all self-government depends entirely upon our own internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds. Indeed, self-government which does not require that continuous striving to attain it and to sustain it is not worth the name. I have therefore endeavoured to show both in word and in deed that political self-government, that is, self-government for a large number of men and women, is no better than individual self-government, and therefore it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule, and so as you know also, I have striven in India to place this ideal before the people, in season and out of

season, very often much to the disgust of those who are merely politically minded.

I belong to that body of political thought which was dominated by Gokhale. I have called him my political *guru* not that everything he said or did I accepted or accept today, but just because the moving force of his life (as I who came in the closest touch with him came to understand) was his intense desire to 'spiritualize politics'. This was his own expression in the preamble to the prospectus of the Servants of India Society, of which he was the founder and the first president. He makes the deliberate statement that he founded that Society in order to introduce spirituality into politics. He had studied the politics not only around him in his own country but had been a close and careful student of history. He had studied the politics of all the countries of the world and having been keenly disappointed to see a complete divorce between politics and spirituality, he endeavoured to the best of his ability, and not without some success. I was almost going to say not without considerable success, to introduce that element into politics. And so it was that he adopted the name of the Servants of India for his Society, which is now serving India in a variety of ways.

I do not know whether what I am saying commends itself to you or not, but if I am to show my gratitude for all the kindness that you have lavishly showered upon me during my brief visit to this beautiful country, if I am to show it in truth, I can only tell you what I feel and not what will probably please you or tickle you. You know that this particular thing—truth—is an integral part of our Congress creed. And we have therefore in the creed the attainment of *swaraj* by legitimate and non-violent means.

You will find that I have not been tired of insisting upon truth and non-violence at any cost. Given these two conditions, in my humble opinion, you can hurl defiance at the mightiest power on earth—and still come away not only yourselves unscathed but you will leave your so-called adversary also uninjured and unhurt. For the time being he may misunderstand the non-violent blows that you deal, he may misrepresent you also, but you don't need to consult his feelings or his opinions so long as you are fulfilling these two absolute

conditions. Then it is well with you, and you can march forward with greater speed than otherwise. The way may appear to be long, but if you take my experience extending over a period of 30 years uninterruptedly, without exception, I give you my assurance that it is the shortest cut to success. I have known no shorter road. I know that it very often requires great faith and immense patience, but if this one thing is fixed on our minds, then there is no other way open to a politician, if he is to serve not himself, but the whole nation. If once that determination is made, then comes faith and with that faith comes also patience, because you know that there is no better or shorter road.

I am afraid as we are in India, so are you cut up into groups and communities. I read casually only today something in praise of communalism. In India also we have this blight—we call it a blight, we don't praise it. Even those who believe in communalism say frankly that it is a necessary evil to be got rid of at the earliest possible moment.

In India we have to deal with 300 million people. But you have to deal with such a small mass of men and women that it is a matter for pain and surprise for me to find a defence—an energetic defence—of this communalism. But I know that it is totally opposed to nationalism. And you want, as you must want, *swaraj*. It is not the birthright of one country only; *swaraj* is the birthright of all countries—I feel constrained to say, the birthright even of the savage as of the most civilized man—how much more of people who have got a culture second to none in the world, a people who have got all that Nature can give you, have got resources in men and money and in natural gifts, who have everything that goes to make you a powerful nation on this globe of ours, yet at the present moment you seem to be far away from it.

I don't suppose that any of you flatters himself or herself with the belief that you have at the present moment anything like what I should consider self-government. And that self-government you will not have—I was going to say you cannot have—unless you speak with the voice of one nation and not with the voice of Christians, Mussalmans, Buddhists, Hindus, Europeans, Sinhalese, Tamils and Malays. I can't understand that

As you, sir, said in your remarks that you represent all races and religions, I congratulate you upon that, and if you are really capable of vindicating that claim, all honour to you, and not only the Congress but you then deserve to be copied by us. We, an older institution, are not able to vindicate that claim. We are striving; we are groping in the dark; we are trying to suppress provincialism; we are trying to suppress racialism; we are trying to suppress religionism, if I may coin a word; we are trying to express nationalism in its fullest form, but I am ashamed to confess to you that we are still far from it. But it is given to you to outstrip us and set us an example. It is easy for you, much easier for you than for us, but a condition indispensable for that is that some of you at least will have to give your whole time to this and not only your whole time but your whole selves and you will have to suppress yourselves.

As Gokhale said, politics had degenerated into a sort of game for leisure hours, whereas he desired that, for some at least, politics should be a wholetime occupation. It should engross the attention of some of the ablest men of the country. It is only when truth, fearlessness and non-violence<sup>2</sup> are dominant factors that a person can devote himself unselfishly to the service of the nation.

I hope that in your Congress you have such a body of men and women, because woman must play her part side by side with man. As I said, in India our one limb is paralysed. Women have got to come up to the level of man. As I said to the ladies at a meeting today, they may not copy man in all the wildness of his nature, but they must come to the level of man in all that is best in him. Then in this island you will have a beautiful blend, then you will be worthy of what Nature has so profusely showered on you.

As I travelled from Kandy to Colombo this morning, I asked myself what the Congress was going to do in order to save Ceylon, whom God had blessed with enough natural intoxication, from the intoxication of that fiery liquid. I make a humble suggestion to you. If the Congress is to be fully national, it cannot leave this fundamental social question. In this temperate climate, where no artificial stimulant is necessary, it is a shame that a substantial part of your income

should be derived from liquor. You may not know what is happening to the labourers whose trustees you are, whose will is only once expressed when they cast their votes in your favour. I saw thousands upon thousands of them at Hatton. I have lost all sense of smell, but a friend told me that some of them were stinking with liquor. They had gone mad over the fact that one of their own was going in their midst, and had broken the bounds of restraint. Well, I know what you will say. You will say it was the result of excess and that it is not bad to drink in moderation. Well, I tell you, I have found so many making that claim and ultimately proving dismal failures.

I have come from cities of South Africa where I have seen Africans, Europeans, Indians rolling in gutters under the influence of drink, I have seen proctors, advocates and barristers rolling in gutters and then the policemen taking them away in order to hide their shame. I have seen captains mad with drink leaving their cabin to the chief officer, or defiling the cabin where they were supposed to keep guard over the safety of their passengers. Claiming, as you do, allegiance to India, and endorsing, as you do, your connection with the story of the *Ramayana*, you should be satisfied with nothing but *Ramayana* which includes *swaraj*. When the evil stalks from corner to corner of this enchanting fairyland, you must take up the question in right earnest and save the nation from ruin.

Then there is the other thing, untouchability. You consider the Rodivas<sup>1</sup> as untouchables and their women are not allowed to cover their upper parts. It is high time for the Congress to take up the question of the Rodiyas, make them their own and enrol them as volunteers in their work. Democracy is an impossible thing until the power is shared by all, but let not democracy degenerate into mobocracy. Even a pariah, a labourer, who makes it possible for you to earn your living, will have his share in self-government. But you will have to touch their lives, go to them, see their hovels where they live packed like sardines. It is up to you to look after this part of humanity. It is possible for you to make their lives or mar their lives. The Indian National Congress deals with both of these questions. They are living planks in our programme. I urge upon you, if you want to make your Congress truly

national and truly representative of the poorest and meanest people of Ceylon, you will add these items to your programme, if you have not already added them, and introduce a full measure of spirituality into your politics and everything else will follow; self-government which is your birthright will drop in your hand like a fully ripe fruit from a laden tree. May this message produce its due effect and penetrate your hearts.

Speech to Ceylon National Congress, Colombo  
*Young India*, 1 Dec. 1927

<sup>1</sup> The story goes that a Rodiya, whose duty was to provide venison to the king, substituted human flesh, and hence the caste was outlawed

## 112. SWARAJ, FREEDOM, AND INDEPENDENCE

It is said that the Independence Resolution is a fitting answer to Lord Birkenhead. If this be a serious contention, we have little notion of the answer that we should make to the appointment of the Statutory Commission and the circumstances attending the announcement of the appointment. The act of appointment needs, for an answer, not speeches, however heroic they may be, not declarations, however brave they may be, but corresponding action adequate to the act of the British Minister, his colleagues and his followers. Supposing the Congress had passed no resolution whatsoever, but had just made a bonfire of every yard of foreign cloth in its possession, and induced a like performance on the part of the whole nation, it would have been some answer, though hardly adequate, to what the act of appointment means. If the Congress could have brought about a strike of every Government employee beginning with the Chief Judges and ending with the petty peons, not excluding soldiers, that act would have been a fairly adequate answer. It would certainly have disturbed the comfortable equanimity with which the British ministers and those concerned are looking upon all our heroics.

It may be said this is merely a counsel of perfection which I should know is not capable of execution. I do not hold that view. Many Indians who are not speaking today are undoubt-



edly preparing in their own manner for the happy day when every Indian, now sustaining the system of Government which holds the nation in bondage, will leave the denationalizing service. It is contended that it is courage, it is undoubtedly wisdom, to restrain the tongue whilst one is unprepared for action. Mere brave speech without action is letting off useless steam. And the strongest speech shed its bravery when, in 1920, patriots learnt to court imprisonment for strong speeches. Speech is necessary for those who are dumbstruck. Restraint is necessary for the garrulous. The English administrators chaff us for our speech and occasionally betray by their acts their contempt of our speeches and thereby tell us more effectively than by words: 'Act if you dare.' Till we can take up the challenge, every single threatening speech or gesture of ours is, in my opinion, a humiliation, and admission of impotence. I have seen prisoners in chains spitting forth oaths only to provide mirth for their jailors.

Moreover, has independence suddenly become a goal in answer to something offensive that some Englishman has done? Do men conceive their goals in order to oblige people or to resent their action? I submit that, if it is a goal, it must be declared and pursued irrespective of the acts or threats of others.

Let us, therefore, understand what we mean by independence. England, Russia, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Chile, Bhutan have all their independence. Which independence do we want? I must not be accused of begging the question. For, if I were told that it is Indian independence that is desired, it is possible to show that no two persons will give the same definition. The fact of the matter is that we do not know our distant goal. It will be determined not by our definitions but by our acts, voluntary and involuntary. If we are wise, we will take care of the present and the future will take care of itself. God has given us only a limited sphere of action and a limited vision. Sufficient unto the day is the good thereof.

I submit that *swaraj* is an all-satisfying goal for all time. We the English-educated Indians often unconsciously make the terrible mistake of thinking that the microscopic minority of English-speaking Indians is the whole of India. I defy anyone

to give for independence a common Indian word intelligible to the masses. Our goal at any rate may be known by an indigenous word understood of the three hundred millions. And we have such a word in '*swaraj*' first used in the name of the nation by Dadabhai Naoroji.<sup>1</sup> It is infinitely greater than and includes independence. It is a vital word. It has been sanctified by the noble sacrifices of thousands of Indians. It is a word which, if it has not penetrated the remotest corner of India, has at least got the largest currency of any similar word. It is a sacrilege to displace that word by a foreign importation of doubtful value. This Independence Resolution is perhaps the final reason for conducting Congress proceedings in Hindustani and that alone. No tragedy like that of the Independence Resolution would then have been possible. The most valiant speakers would then have ornamented the native meaning of the word '*swaraj*' and attempted all kinds of definitions, glorious and inglorious. Would that the independents would profit by their experience and resolve henceforth to work among the masses for whom they desire freedom and taboo English speech in its entirety in so far as mass meetings such as the Congress are concerned.

Personally, I crave not for 'independence', which I do not understand, but I long for freedom from the English yoke. I would pay any price for it. I would accept chaos in exchange for it. For the English peace is the peace of the grave. Anything would be better than this living death of a whole people. This Satanic rule has well-nigh ruined this fair land materially, morally and spiritually. I daily see its law-courts denying justice and murdering truth. I have just come from terrorized Orissa. This rule is using my own countrymen for its sinful sustenance. I have a number of affidavits swearing that, in the district of Khurda, acknowledgments of enhancement of revenue are being forced from the people practically at the point of the bayonet. The unparalleled extravagance of this rule has demented the Rajas and the Maharajas who, unmindful of consequences, ape it and grind their subjects to dust. In order to protect its immoral commerce, this rule regards no means too mean, and in order to keep three hundred millions under the heels of a hundred thousand, it carries a military expenditure which is keeping millions in a state of

semi-starvation and polluting thousands of mouths with intoxicating liquor

But my creed is non-violence under all circumstances. My method is conversion, not coercion, it is self-suffering, not the suffering of the tyrant. I know that method to be infallible. I know that a whole people can adopt it without accepting it as its creed and without understanding its philosophy. People generally do not understand the philosophy of all their acts. My ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation in which England is the greatest partner. If India converts, as it can convert, Englishmen, it can become the predominant partner in a world commonwealth of which England can have the privilege of becoming a partner if she chooses. India has the right if she only knew, of becoming the predominant partner by reason of her numbers, geographical position and culture inherited for ages. This is big talk, I know. For a fallen India to aspire to move the world and protect weaker races is seemingly an impertinence. But in explaining my strong opposition to this cry for independence, I can no longer hide the light under a bushel. Mine is an ambition worth living for and worth dying for. In no case do I want to reconcile myself to a state lower than the best for fear of consequences. It is, therefore, not out of expedience that I oppose independence as my goal. I want India to come to her own and that state cannot be better defined by any single word than '*swaraj*'. Its content will vary with the action that the nation is able to put forth at a given moment. India's coming to her own will mean every nation doing likewise.

'Independence v. *Swaraj*  
*Young India*, 12 Jan. 1928

<sup>1</sup> In his presidential address at the Calcutta Congress in 1906 Dadabhai Naoroji used the word '*swaraj*' as a synonym for self government.

## 113. CHARTER OF INDEPENDENCE

December 29, 1928

At the time of writing this (forenoon, 29th December) it is too early to give my impressions of the Congress. The events are moving and changing so fast that the impressions of the morning are nullified by those of the evening. Meanwhile, therefore, it may be well to understand the controversy ranging round Dominion Status and Independence. The more I hear the arguments of those who have forced the issue, the more clearly do I see the harm that is being done by it. Up to a certain point it was perhaps health-giving and necessary. It was certainly good to appreciate the fact that nothing short of independence could possibly be the goal of the nation and that therefore every advance should be interpreted in terms of independence. It follows therefore that every political change or reform that may impede the nation's march towards independence should be rejected.

But what is the meaning of this independence? For me its meaning is *swaraj*. Independence is a word employed for European consumption. And those whose eyes are turned outward, whether it be towards West or East, North or South, are thinking of anything but India's independence. For finding India's independence we must look to India and her sons and daughters, her needs, and capacity. It is obvious that the contents of her independence must therefore vary with her varying needs and increasing capacity. India's independence therefore need not have the meaning current in the West. Italian independence is different from that of England, Sweden's differs from both.

One thing that we need is undoubtedly freedom from British *control in any shape or form*. But freedom from such control of any other power is equally our need in terms of independence. The Nehru Report points the way to such freedom and it prescribes the remedy that India can assimilate today. It is a worthless document if it means anything less. Its acceptance is wholly compatible with the national goal and I venture to think that the fiercest champion of national independence can and should safely work for its full fruition. The

Report is not an end in itself. It simply gives us the formula according to which we should work. It presumes concentrated ceaseless work by all the different parties before it can bear fruit.

Great confusion has been created by tearing the much abused expression 'Dominion Status' from its context. It is not an elixir of life to be imported from Westminster to put life into us. The expression has been used by the distinguished authors of the Report to show by analogy what in their opinion is needed for India's political growth. The scheme of government adumbrated in the Report, whether it is known by the expression Dominion Status or any other, whilst it may tully answer our needs today, may easily fall short of them tomorrow. But it contains its own corrective. For it is a scheme to be worked out by the nation, not one to be imposed upon or thrown at her by Britain. If it fructifies, it *contains all we need* for future growth; hence I call it the Charter of our Independence.

After all, if the Nehru Report is consigned to oblivion, we shall still need a charter. It may be known as the charter of India's independence and may still conceivably be much less than the Dominion Status of the Nehru Report.

If what we want therefore cannot be sufficiently described by the *swadeshi* word *swaraj*, it cannot be described by any other word that can be coined. All that the man in the street should know is that he wants the scheme of government framed by the nation's representatives without the change of a comma and then he can say with the greatest confidence: 'What is in a name?'

That the Nehru scheme requires endorsement by the British Parliament is no defect in it. Since we are connected with Britain, we shall in every case need some sort of endorsement from her Parliament whether the scheme is to be transmutation of the present bondage into an absolutely equal partnership to be destroyed at will or whether it is to end every sort of connection with Britain. I shall always maintain that the transmutation, complete conversion, is any day a higher status than destruction. But of this later. Enough for us to learn by heart for the moment that any scheme to take us towards *swaraj* or if you will, independence, must be framed by us and

must be accepted without a single alteration dictated by the British Parliament.

'What's In A Name?'

*Young India*, 3 Jan. 1929

#### 114. PURNA SWARAJ AND NON-VIOLENCE

A fair friend writes . . .<sup>1</sup>

This letter raises two questions. I shall take the last first. To qualify '*swaraj*' is no doubt doing violence to art. The writer's logic is also irresistible. But very often in national and similar complex matters logic and art have apparently to be sacrificed. In substance that which carries out a good intention is both true logic and true art. '*Swaraj*' in the Congress constitution was given a double meaning; it could be within the Empire if possible, without if necessary. A word or an expression had therefore to be found in order to connote the last meaning only. We could not do without the word '*swaraj*'. Hence the expedience of '*purna swaraj*'. I admit that it does not sound well to the ear. But if it carries out the nation's meaning as it does, it will presently sound well. We could not have managed with a dubious word.

The second question is more difficult to dispose of. But attainment of *swaraj* means conquest over all difficulties. Non-violence or rather non-violent men are on their trial. They have to find out the best method of offering battle in spite of the violent atmosphere surrounding them. Non-violence is not of much consequence if it can flourish only in a congenial atmosphere. It is not then non-violence. It may easily be fear of being hurt. But my reading of the national temper is somewhat different from the friend's. Dissensions and squabbles do not affect those who have ultimately to take part in the struggle. The latter will instinctively react to active non-violence. But whether they do or not, the party of non-violence must now use up all its resources. There can be no more waiting without its creed being laughed at or itself being

thoroughly and rightly discredited. If it cannot act, it must own its incapacity and retire from the field of battle.

Why *Purna Swaraj*?

*Young India*, 6 Feb. 1930

<sup>1</sup> The correspondent had doubted the nation's capacity to win independence by non-violent means and questioned the propriety of prefixing the adjective *purna* to *swaraj*.

115 A LIFE-AND-DEATH STRUGGLE

Oxford,<sup>1</sup>

October 24, 1931

Sir Gilbert Murray seemed to be very much perturbed over what he thought were most dangerous manifestations of non-violent revolution and nationalism. 'I find myself today in greater disagreement with you than even Mr. Winston Churchill,' he said. Gandhi said:

You want co-operation between nations for the salvaging of civilization. I want it too, but co-operation presupposes free nations worthy of co-operation. If I am to help in creating or restoring peace and goodwill and resist disturbances thereof I must have ability to do so and I cannot do so unless my country has come to its own. At the present moment, the very movement for freedom in India is India's contribution to peace. For so long as India is a subject nation, not only she is a danger to peace, but also England which exploits India. Other nations may tolerate today England's Imperialist policy and her exploitation of other nations, but they certainly do not appreciate it, and they would gladly help in the prevention of England becoming a greater and greater menace every day. Of course you will say that India free can become a menace herself. But let us assume that she will behave herself with her doctrine of non-violence, if she achieves her freedom through it, and for all her bitter experience of being a victim to exploitation.

The objection about my talking in terms of revolution is

largely answered by what I have already said about nationalism. But my movement is conditioned by one great and disturbing factor. You might of course say that there can be no non-violent rebellion and there has been none known to history. Well, it is my ambition to provide an instance, and it is my dream that my country may win its freedom through non-violence. And, I would like to repeat to the whole world times without number that I will not purchase my country's freedom at the cost of non-violence. My marriage with non-violence is such an absolute thing that I would rather commit suicide than be deflected from my position. I have not mentioned truth in this connection, simply because truth cannot be expressed except by non-violence. So, if you accept the conception, my position is sound. . . .

You may be justified in saying that I must go more warily, but, if you attack the fundamentals, you have to convince me. And I must tell you that the boycott may have nothing to do with nationalism even. It may be a question of pure reform, as without being intensely nationalistic, we can refuse to purchase your cloth and make our own. A reformer cannot always afford to wait. If he does not put into force his belief he is no reformer. Either he is too hasty or too afraid or too lazy. Who is to advise him or provide him with a barometer? You can only guide yourself with a disciplined conscience, and then run all risks with the protecting armour of truth and non-violence. A reformer could not do otherwise.

Q. Would not India wait some time before she launched on the difficult task of self-government? If we send out our soldiers, we have to be responsible for their lives, and so may it not be that the sooner you get an Indian army the better? The Muslim community said last year in a united voice that they did not want responsibility at the centre. How are we to judge?

A. The long and the short of it is that you will not trust us. Well, give us the liberty to make mistakes. If we cannot handle our affairs today, who is to say when we will be able to do so? I do not want you to determine the pace. Consciously or unconsciously you adopt the role of divinity. I ask you for a moment to come down from that pedestal. Trust us to ourselves. I cannot imagine anything worse happening than is



happening today, a whole humanity lying prostrate at the feet of a small nation.

And what is this talk of being responsible for the lives of your soldiers? I issue a notice to all foreigners to enlist for military service in India, and if some Britishers will come, will you prevent them? If they will enlist, we should be responsible for their lives, as any other Government whom they serve would be. The key to self-government is without doubt the control of the army.

As regards a united demand, I must say, what I have now said several times, that you cannot have a united demand from a packed Conference. It is my case that the Congress represents the largest number of Indians. The British Ministers know it. If they do not know it, I must go back to my country and have as overwhelming an opinion as possible. We had a life-and-death struggle. One of the noblest of Englishmen<sup>2</sup> tried us and did not find us wanting. In consequence he opened the jail gates and appealed to the Congress to go to the Round Table Conference. We had long talks and negotiations during which we exercised the greatest patience and there was a Settlement under which the Congress agreed to be represented on the Round Table Conference. The Settlement was respected by Government more in its breach than its observance, and after much hesitation I agreed to come, if only to keep my word of honour given to that Englishman. On coming here I find that I had miscalculated the forces arrayed against India and the Congress. But that does not dismay me. I must go and qualify myself and prove by suffering that the whole country wants what it asks for. Hunter has said that success on the battle-field was the shortest cut to power. Well, we worked for success on a different battle-field. I am trying to touch your heart instead of your body. If I do not succeed this time, I shall succeed next time.

Talk at Oxford

*Young India*, 12 Nov. 1931

<sup>1</sup> Those present at the talk included Dr. Gilbert Murray, Dr. Gilbert Slater, Prof. Reginald Coupland, and Dr. Datta.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Irwin, as Viceroy of India.

## 116. SWARAJ AND EXPLOITATION

[23 February 1935]

I am afraid I must repeat the gospel to you and remind you that, when you demand *swaraj*, you do not want *swaraj* for yourself alone, but for your neighbour, too. The principle is neither metaphysical nor too philosophical for comprehension. It is just good common sense. If you love thy neighbour as thyself, he will do likewise with you.

What you say about the difficulties of a worker in the villages is too true,<sup>1</sup> but we have got to falsify it. We have to be true villagers without their shortcomings and failings, and I am quite sure that, when we do so, there would be no difficulty for an honest labourer to earn a living wage. But let no one come and tell me: 'I have a mother, three widowed sisters, a brother who has to be sent to England to be called to the Bar, another reading in Muir College and a third to be sent to the Indian Sandhurst.' Sure enough, work in the villages will not give such a one a 'living'! But it is possible to earn a genuine living for all the members of one's family, if all those members also will work, as do all the members in a peasant's family.

There is a conflict of interest between capital and labour, but we have to resolve it by doing our own duty. Just as pure blood is proof against poisonous germs, so will labour, when it is pure, be proof against exploitation. The labourer has but to realize that labour is also capital. As soon as labourers are properly educated and organized and they realize their strength, no amount of capital can subdue them. Organized and enlightened labour can dictate its own terms. It is no use vowing vengeance against a party because we are weak. We have to get strong. Strong hearts, enlightened minds and willing hands can brave all odds and remove all obstacles. No, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' is no counsel of perfection. The capitalist is as much a neighbour of the labourer as the latter is a neighbour of the former, and one has to seek and win the willing co-operation of the other. Nor does the principle mean that we should accept exploitation lying down. Our internal strength will render all exploitation impossible.

Speech at Meeting of Village Workers, Nagpur  
Harian, 1 Mar 1935

<sup>1</sup> A worker had said that he had found it very difficult to live like a villager in a village and make both ends meet

117 VILLAGE SWARAJ

Sevagram,  
July 18 1942

2 In view of the situation that may arise at any moment in India would you give an outline or skeleton of a village *swaraj* committee, which could function in all village matters in the absence of, and without relying upon an overhead Government or other organization? In particular how would you ensure that the Committee should be fully representative and that it would act impartially efficiently and without favour or fear? What should be the scope of authority and the machinery to enforce its commands? And what should be the manner in which a committee or an individual member of it could be removed for corruption inefficiency or other unfitness?

A My idea of village *swaraj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of *satyagraha* and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory

service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village.

The government of the village will be conducted by a Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of the village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour.

The reader may well ask me I am asking myself while penning these lines as to why I have not been able to model Sevagram after the picture here drawn. My answer is: I am making the attempt. I can see dim traces of success though I can show nothing visible. But there is nothing inherently impossible in the picture drawn here. To model such a village may be the work of a lifetime. Any lover of true democracy and village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good results. He begins by being the village scavenger, spinner, watchman, medicine man and schoolmaster all at once. If nobody comes near him, he will be satisfied with scavenging and spinning.

'Question Box'

*Haryan*, 26 July 1942

118. FEARLESSNESS IS SWARAJ

Sodepur,

December 22, 1945

We do not want to live on the mercy of anybody except God. *Gita* teaches us to be fearless. If you could learn that, nobody would be able to keep you down. If anybody asks me to bow down my head I am an old man and anybody can push me or knock me down but if I say, 'I won't', the utmost he can do is to kill me. This fearlessness is *swaraj*. If everybody acts in the same way or feels in the same spirit, *swaraj* is there. It, however, does not mean that Government will go away today but it means that no power can make us bow down our head. We would not achieve independence by simply repeating the word like a parrot. Our deeds must be on the same line.

Speech at Prayer Meeting

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 23 Dec 1945

119. BEYOND FEAR AND HATRED

Utruli-Kanchan]

March '9, 1946

In terms of non-violence, 'Quit India' is a healthy, potent cry of the soul. It is not a slogan. It means the end, through means purely truthful and non-violent, of foreign rule and domination. It does not mean the foreigner's destruction but his willing conversion to Indian life. In this scheme, there is no room for hatred of the foreigner. He is a man, even as we are. It is fear of him that gives rise to hatred. Fear gone, there can be no hatred.

Thus his conversion implies our conversion too. If we cease to be inferiors, he cannot be our superior. His arsenals and his weapons, typified in their extreme in the atom bomb, should have no terror for us. It follows that we may not covet them. We often make the mistake of thinking that we must first have things before we cease to covet them. This tempting argument leads to the prolongation of the agony. Must I do all the evil

I can, before I learn to shun it? Is it not enough to know the evil to shun it? If not, we should be sincere enough to admit that we love evil too well to give it up.

Let us assume that foreign rule is ended. What should the foreigner do? He could hardly be considered free when he was protected by British arms. As a free man he will discover that it was wrong to possess privileges which the millions of India could not enjoy. He will live doing his duty as behoves a son of India. He will no longer live at India's expense. On the contrary, he will give India all his talents and by his services render himself indispensable to the land of his adoption.

If this is true of the European, how much more true must it be for those Anglo-Indians and others who have adopted European manners and customs in order to be classed as Europeans demanding preferential treatment? All such people will find themselves ill at ease, if they expect continuation of the favoured treatment hitherto enjoyed by them.

They should rather feel thankful that they will be disburdened of preferential treatment to which they had no right by any known canon of reasoning, and which was defogatory to their dignity.

We have all rulers and ruled been living so long in a stifling, unnatural atmosphere that we might well feel in the beginning that we have lost the lungs for breathing the invigorating ozone of freedom. If the reality comes in an orderly, that is, a non-violent manner, because the parties feel that it is right, it will be a revealing lesson for the world

'Implications of "Quit India"'

*Harijan*, 7 Apr 1946

New Delhi,  
April 29, 1946

Friends have repeatedly challenged me to define independence. At the risk of repetition, I must say that the indepen-

dence of my dream means *Ramarajya*, i.e., the Kingdom of God on Earth. I do not know what it will be like in Heaven. I have no desire to know the distant scene. If the present is attractive enough, the future cannot be very unlike.

In concrete terms, then, the independence should be political, economic and moral.

'Political' necessarily means the removal of the control of the British army in every shape and form.

'Economic' means entire freedom from British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterparts. In other words, the humblest must feel equal to the tallest. This can take place only by capital or capitalists sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least.

'Moral' means freedom from armed defence forces. My conception of *Ramarajya* excludes replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so-called weakest member can never rise to his full moral height.

Though Mr. Churchill is claimed to have won the war for the British, he has in his Aberdeen speech uttered words of wisdom from the standpoint of a radical non-violent reformer. He knows, if any panoplied warrior knows, what havoc the two wars of our generation have wrought. In another column I reproduce the summary of his speech as reported in the public Press. Only I must warn the public against the pessimistic note underlying the speech. Nothing will be found to have gone wrong if mankind recoils from the horrors of war. The bloodletting that men have undergone to the point of whiteness will not have been in vain, if it has taught us that we must freely give our own blood in the place of taking other people's blood, be the cause ever so noble or ignoble.

If the Cabinet Mission 'delivers the goods', India will have to decide whether attempting to become a military power she would be content to become, at least for some years, a fifth-rate power in the world without a message in answer to the pessimism described above, or whether she will by further refining and continuing her non-violent policy prove herself worthy of being the first nation in the world using her hard-

won freedom for the delivery of the earth from the burden which is crushing her in spite of the so-called victory

‘Independence’

*Haryan*, 5 May 1946

## 121 INDEPENDENT INDIA OF MY DREAM

Kafilatali,

February 12, 1947

Independent India, as conceived by me will have all Indians belonging to different religions living in perfect friendship. There need be no millionaires and no paupers, all would belong to the State, for the State belonged to them. I will die in the act of realizing this dream. I would not wish to live to see India torn asunder by civil strife.

From Speech at Prayer Meeting

*The Hindu* 15 Feb. 1947

## 122 THE THRESHOLD OF INDEPENDENCE

April 11 1947

Truly speaking it was after I went to South Africa that I became what I am now. My love for South Africa and my concern for her problems are no less than for India because it was in South Africa that I discovered the weapon of *satyagraha*, and it was there that I offered a successful non-violent *satyagraha*. It encouraged me in my line of thought and strengthened my faith.

India is now on the threshold of independence. But this is not the independence I want. To my mind it will be no independence if India is partitioned and the minorities do not enjoy security, protection and equal treatment. Because the independence of my dreams is altogether different. The country is not yet completely independent. If what is happening today is an earnest of things to come after independence, it



bodes no good for the future. We have a proverb saying that the cradle bespeaks the child's future. I, therefore, feel ill at ease. But I am content to leave the future in God's good hands.

Talk with Y. M. Dadoo and O. M. Naicker (G.)  
*Biharni Komi Agman*, p. 187

### 123. FREEDOM, ANARCHY, AND STATESMANSHIP

[On the 5th of May Gandhi answered several questions put to him by Mr Doon Campbell, Reuter's special correspondent at New Delhi.]

Q. Is the communal division of India inevitable? Will such division solve the communal problem?

A. Personally, I have always said No, and I say No even now to both these questions.

Q. Do you subscribe to the opinion that Britain will be morally obliged to stay on in India if the outstanding Hindu-Muslim differences have not been resolved by June, 1948?

A. This is a question that has never been put to me before. It would be a good thing if the British were to go today—thirteen months means mischief to India. I do not question the nobility of the British declaration, I do not question the sincerity of the Viceroy but facts are facts. Neither the British Cabinet nor the Viceroy, however outstanding he may be, can alter facts. And the facts are that India has been trained to look to the British power for everything. Now it is not possible for India to take her mind off that state all of a sudden. I have never appreciated the argument that the British want so many months to get ready to leave. During that time all parties will look to the British Cabinet and the Viceroy. We have not defeated the British by force of arms. It has been a victory for India by moral force.

Assuming, of course, that every word of what has been said

is meant to be carried out, then the British decision will go down in history as the noblest act of the British Nation. That being so, the thirteen months' stay of the British power and British arms is really a hindrance rather than a help, because everybody looks for help to the great military machine they have brought into being. That happened in Bengal, in Bihar, in the Punjab, and in the North-West Frontier Province. The Hindus and the Muslims said in turn: 'Let us have the British troops.' It is a humiliating spectacle. I have often said before but it does not suffer in value through repetition because every time I repeat it, it gains force: the British will have to take the risk of leaving India to chaos or anarchy. This is so because there has been no Home Rule; it has been imposed on the people. And, when you voluntarily remove that rule there might be no rule in the initial state. It might have come about if we had gained victory by the force of arms. The communal feuds you see here are, in my opinion, partly due to the presence of the British. If the British were not here, we would still go through the fire no doubt, but that fire would purify us.

Q What sort of Indo British relationship do you envisage after June, 1948?

A I envisage the friendliest relationship between Britain and India assuming that a complete withdrawal takes place with complete honesty behind it—no mental reservations of any kind whatsoever.

Q Does the clause incorporated in the Draft Constitution on the abolition of untouchability in itself represent a great reform?

A No. That clause does not represent a great or any reform. It registers the fact that a great revolutionary reform has taken place in Hindu society. I confess that untouchability has not yet been pulled out root and branch from the soil. Like the evil effects of the British connection, those of untouchability, a much older institution, do not disappear in a flash. It may take some years, perhaps, before a stranger coming to India can say there is no untouchability in any shape or form.

Q. Do you believe the United Nations Organization, as at present constituted, can maintain a lasting peace?

A. No. I fear the world is heading towards another show-down. It is a fear that permeates many minds. But if all goes well in India, then the world may have a long peace. It will largely depend on the manner in which India takes it. And that will depend largely on British statesmanship.

Q. What is the solution to the Palestine problem?

A. It has become a problem which is almost insoluble. If I were a Jew, I would tell them: 'Don't be so silly as to resort to terrorism, because you simply damage our own case which otherwise would be a proper case.' If it is just political hankering then I think there is no value in it. Why should they hanker after Palestine? 'They are a great race and have great gifts. I have lived with the Jews many years in South Africa. If it is a religious longing then surely terrorism has no place. They should meet the Arabs, make friends with them, and not depend on British aid or American aid or any aid, save what descends from Jehovah.

'Quit Now'

*Harijan*; 18 May 1947

#### 124. DEMORALIZATION ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE

New Delhi,  
May 29, 1947

CO-WORKER: You have declared you won't mind if the whole of India is turned into Pakistan by appeal to reason but not an inch would be yielded to force. You have stood firm by your declaration. But is the Working Committee acting on this principle? They are yielding to force. You gave us the battle-cry of Quit India; you fought our battles; but in the hour of decision, I find you are not in the picture. You and your ideals have been given the go-by.

GANDHI: Who listens to me today?

Leaders may not, but the people are behind you.

Even they are not. I am being told to retire to the Himalayas. Everybody is eager to garland my photos and statues. Nobody really wants to follow my advice.

They may not today, but they will have to before long.

What is the good? Who knows whether I shall then be alive? The question is: What can we do today? On the eve of independence we are as divided as we were united when we were engaged in freedom's battle. The prospect of power has demoralized us.

'Talk with a Co-Worker'

*Mahatma Gandhi The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 209

## 125 INDIA'S VIVISECTION

June 1, 1947

The purity of my *yajna* will be put to the test only now. Today I find myself all alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon. The Viceroy is a nice and intelligent man. They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule. They wonder if I have not deteriorated with age. But if I did not show myself as I am, I would prove a hypocrite. And I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true and loyal friend to the Congress. Never mind if I am not a four-anna member of the Congress. But they all come and consult me, seek my advice. Similarly I am also a friend of the British. I must therefore tell the British what is good for them. Else, of what use is my being their friend? If I were to prove my true and loyal friendship to them it becomes my bounden duty to lay bare the facts before them and show them the right way, regardless of whether my advice is appreciated or resented.

I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark. I pray that God may not keep me alive to witness it. And I have left you in this vast field to fend for yourself. I have done it with full deliberation because you share my burden in this sacrifice although you are a little girl with no experience of life. In order that God may give me the strength and wisdom to remain firm in the midst of universal opposition and to utter the full truth, I need all the strength of purity that you will have in your sincere work, whether in thought or act, while waking or asleep or even when you are not conscious of yourself. In the matter of devotion or purity, or in treading the path of truth, years hardly count; what is needed is spiritual strength. Wasn't Prahlad very young? Had little Dhruva attained a mature age? But they had the strength to tread the path of truth. Moreover, a man may grow old and yet be a fraud. But somehow in spite of my being all alone, in my thoughts, I am experiencing an ineffable inner joy and freshness of mind. I feel as if God himself was lighting my path before me. And it is perhaps the reason why I am able to fight on single-handed.

People now ask me to retire to Kashi or go to the Himalayas. I laugh and tell them that the Himalayas of my penance are where there is misery to be alleviated, oppression to be relieved. There can be no rest for me so long as there is a single person in India whether man or woman, young or old, lacking the necessities of life, by which I mean a sense of security, a life style worthy of human beings, i.e., clothing, education, food and shelter of a decent standard. I said the same thing to Sarat Babu yesterday. I cannot bear to see Badshah Khan's grief. His inner agony wrings my heart, but if I gave way to tears, it would be cowardly and, stalwart Pathan as he is, he would break down. And I don't want him to break down. But maybe all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness. The more you remain vigilant and cheerful by maintaining good health the more you will influence all that I do.

I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imper-

illed, let posterity know what agony this old man went through thinking of it. Let not the coming generations curse Gandhi for being a party to India's vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for independence. Therefore there is no alternative. This is like eating wooden *laddoos*:<sup>1</sup> if they eat it they die of colic; if they don't they starve.

Talk with Manu Gandhi (G.)

*Bihar Pachhi Dilli*, pp. 50-2

<sup>1</sup> Indian sweets, in the form of little balls

## 126. SELF-GOVERNMENT AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

June 6, 1947

I am replying to your letter today itself. You are gravely mistaken in assuming that as soon as *swaraj* comes prosperity will flood the country. If, before assuming that, you had used your imagination a bit to see that after 150 years of slavery, we would need at least half that much time to cleanse our body-politic of the virus that has infiltrated every cell and pore of our being during our subjection, you would not have found it necessary to ask me. I am sure you will understand what I mean, namely, that far greater sacrifices will be needed after the attainment of self-government to establish good government and raise the people than were required for the attainment of freedom by means of *satyagraha*.

'A Letter' (G.)

*Bihar Pachhi Dilli* p 81

## 127. BEYOND PARTIES AND ISMS

June 7, 1947

Today the rulers are not foreigners but our own countrymen. If we do not work in perfect harmony with them, our newly-won freedom will be in danger. Let all people sit together and

find a proper solution to problems on which there are differences. But our greatest defect is that, as soon as we differ from somebody ever so slightly, or a misunderstanding arises, instead of meeting the person concerned and trying to find a solution we take him to task publicly. This creates a great mental gulf between people, leading to antagonism. Parties and isms are only results of such differences. One fruit of this poison we have seen in the coming into existence of Pakistan. Are we not satisfied even with that?

You have simply not understood what socialism means. The Russian type of socialism will not suit India at all. Even in Russia their policies have not succeeded completely. Why don't you try to save the country from the calamity which has befallen it today? So long as this communal virus has not been eradicated, socialism will never come. Note down and remember, all of you, these words of an old man. The people will want to see our work and our sacrifices; they will judge our labour and look for perfection of character in us. But you wish to pay no attention to these things. On the one hand, hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters have become homeless. If now you incite the people and exploit these riots to establish new parties or spread your isms, rest assured God will never forgive this terrible crime of betrayal of the country.

Discussion with Socialist Workers (G.)

*Bihar Pachhu Dulhi*, pp. 4-5

# 128. PURVA SWARAJ IS FAR OFF

[Before 25 July 1947]

Why so jubilant? *Purna swaraj* is far off.

Have we got *swaraj*? Did *swaraj* mean only that the British rule should end? To my mind it was not so. For me Sabarmati<sup>1</sup> is far off, Noakhali is near.

Letter to Hariprasad Desai

*The Hindustan Times*, 28 July 1947

<sup>1</sup> The addressee, an old associate, had asked Gandhi to return to Ahmedabad as Gandhi had pledged on the eve of the Dandi March to go back to Sabarmati Ashram after India attained *swaraj*

### § 3. Imperialism

#### 129. BRITISH RULE AND THE PROCLAMATION OF 1859

This memorable Proclamation, which has been rightly termed 'the Magna Charta of the British Indians', is worthy of the attention and study of the people of South Africa, especially at a time like this, when a sustained agitation has been set up against British Indians throughout this sub-continent. It may not be out of place to refer to the origin of that document. As the world knows, the year 1857 was a year of great anxiety and trouble throughout the British dominions owing to the great Sepoy Revolt in India. At one time the cloud looked so black that even the final result had become a matter of uncertainty. An appeal was made to the worst superstitions of the people of India, religion was greatly brought into play, and all that could possibly be done by the evil-minded was done to unsettle people's minds, and to make them hostile to British rule. It was at that time of stress and trouble that the great mass of the Indian people remained absolutely firm and unshaken in their loyalty.

The late Sir John Lawrence has been called the Saviour of the Punjab, as indeed he was the saviour, in a very great measure, of the whole of British India. The reason, however, why he came to deserve that title was because he turned to the very best account the loyalty of the martial races of the Punjab, who had, only a few years before that eventful year, offered stubborn resistance to the British army at the historic field of Chillianwalla.<sup>1</sup> And throughout India did the masses remain faithful, and refuse to make common cause with the mutineers. All this was known to Lord Canning. He, in due course, transmitted to the late Queen-Empress the pathetic incidents that took place when the British Indians, at the peril of their lives, saved hundreds of English men and women. When, therefore, the Mutiny was ultimately stamped out, and when the time came for showing the Royal clemency, Lord Derby, the then Prime Minister, was commanded by the Queen to draft a proclamation.

All the incidents connected with the draft have been preserved to us by the late Prince-Consort. We read in his work



that the Queen did not like the draft because she considered it to be too tame, and not in keeping with the events that had taken place in India in connection with the Mutiny. She, therefore, commanded Lord Derby to re-draft it, laying stress upon the fact that it was a female Sovereign speaking to the millions of her faithful subjects who had just emerged from a terrible time, and that the Proclamation should be a document of freedom for the people of India, which they could treasure and value. It was then that the Proclamation in its present form was drafted and given to the people. It is superfluous to refer to the numerous occasions on which it has been referred to as the document giving the people of India full privileges and rights of British subjects. Viceroys after Viceroys have repeated the same thing, and Lord Curzon has, more than once, from his place in the Legislative Council at Calcutta, reiterated the promises made therein. Last, but not least, our King-Emperor, in his message to the Viceroy at the Delhi Durbar, said much the same thing.

Is it, then, any wonder that the British Indians, no matter where they go, invoke the aid of that Proclamation in their favour whenever any attempt is made to curtail their liberties or their rights as British subjects? We reproduce below the main portions of the Proclamation. Our readers will notice that in it there is absolutely no qualification whatsoever with reference to the place where the people to whom it was given are to enjoy the fulfilment of the promises given therein. It becomes necessary to mention this fact, as attempts have often been made in South Africa to explain away the document by saying that, as it was given in India, its applicability was confined merely to that place. As against this contention, we might, however, state that, in reply to a representation from Natal which referred to the Proclamation, Lord Ripon, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies affirmed that: 'The Queen's Indian subjects were entitled to the same rights in the Colonies as all her other subjects.' Time and circumstances have thus combined to sanctify the Proclamation, and no matter what others may say to the contrary, it will ever remain a cherished treasure to the Indian community, wherever settled, so long as the British Empire lasts.

Portions of the Proclamation referred to above:

We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects; and those obligations, by the blessings of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.

And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge.

In their prosperity will be our strength; in their contentment, our security; and in their gratitude, our best reward. And may the God of all power grant to us, and to those in authority under us, strength to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people.

‘The Proclamation of 1859’  
*Indian Opinion*, 9 July 1903

<sup>1</sup> This was during the Second Sikh War, 1848

### 130. GOOD INTENTIONS AND AUTOCRATIC RULE

The inevitable has happened and Lord Curzon is no more an Indian Viceroy. It is an irony of fate that when he seemed to be irremovable, he had to go under circumstances the most humiliating. A Viceroy to whom prestige was everything and who relied greatly on it for success in many things he undertook has been obliged to leave India without a vestige of it remaining. That such a fate should be brought about by the discredit of a War Minister adds point to the degradation Lord Curzon has had to undergo. It would almost appear to be an answer to the prayer of the suffering millions who were groaning under his autocratic rule.

We think that, in all he did, Lord Curzon was actuated by good intentions. He undoubtedly believed that he was doing good to the people of India in spite of themselves, in forcing down their throats what he was pleased to term reforms. No Viceroy excited on the threshold of his career the expectations that Lord Curzon did. His speeches led the Indians to believe that he would out-Ripon Ripon<sup>1</sup> in his treatment of Indian problems. In his minute on the behaviour of the British soldiers, he even translated his promises into deeds. His reduction

of the salt tax and his advocacy of the cause of British Indians in South Africa will always stand to his credit. But when full allowance has been made for these things, the net result is such that he has succeeded in earning the dislike of the people at the end of his career, in the same measure that he began with their goodwill. Even though the cause of his resignation is unfortunate in that it betokens the triumph of military autocracy over civilian rule, we can quite imagine that today in thousands of Indian homes there must be a time of joy and thanksgiving for what will be considered, not without reason, a good deliverance.

The career of Lord Curzon makes it very risky to base any expectations upon the new Viceroy; and it would be perhaps far safer to expect nothing if we would be blessed; but in Lord Minto, the Viceroy-designate, India will have a nobleman not unknown to it, as he belongs to an illustrious family which has already given a Viceroy to India. His Colonial experience may be of inestimable advantage in Indian administration; and, if the traditions of Colonial Governorship, which are always strictly constitutional, are kept up in India, that portion of King Edward's Empire may look forward to a peaceful and sympathetic rule for the next five years. Heaven grant that it may be so. Famine once again threatens to overtake the land; plague still continues to exact its toll; poverty daily undermines millions of families: only broadest sympathy and kindness to the governed can help them in this dreadful trinity of evils.

'Lord Curzon'

*Indian Opinion*, 26 Aug. 1905

<sup>1</sup> (1827-1909), Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1880-4, and Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1892-5

### 131. DIVIDE AND RULE

The title of this article is a maxim as old as the hills, and the policy underlying the maxim was enunciated by a British statesman in connection with British rule in India. The cable-

gram from India that has appeared lately in the newspapers brings the aphorism vividly home to us. It is said that twenty thousand Mahomedans at Dacca, the capital of the new province partitioned from Bengal, assembled together and offered prayers of thanksgiving to the Almighty for the partition, and their consequent deliverance from Hindu oppression. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that the movement could possibly be spontaneous. It is absurd on the face of it. Assuming that there was any oppression on the part of the Hindus, relief could be obtained without partition, because the might of the British power was there to protect one community against another. It is, therefore, we consider, a response to the very powerful agitation that has been set up in Bengal against partition. The boycott has spread with an intensity never known before. It has permeated classes as well as masses, and, if it is nursed long enough, it bids fair to weld together all the communities in Bengal, not excluding the Mahomedans. Those, therefore, who believe in the maxim above quoted, naturally wanted an antidote and they have found it amongst a few Mahomedans in Dacca.

It is short-sighted statesmanship to contemplate the government of millions of human beings on the principle of setting one class against another. We know that such a suggestion would be vehemently repudiated, and we know also that pure British statesmanship would revolt against the idea. At the same time, the policy itself is deep rooted, has been followed before with temporary effect, and the *tamasha*<sup>1</sup> in Dacca is but a continuation of it. If the Anglo Indian administrators, who have really built up the Indian Empire, and who depended for its continuance on the goodwill of the people, were to rise from their graves today, they, in our opinion, would be the first to encourage the boycott agitation, at the same time, conciliating public opinion, which has become so excited. What can be more natural than for the people to wish to clothe themselves, to feed themselves, and to supply their luxuries out of home-grown products and home manufactures? We see such movements worked out more extensively in many Colonies. It is a legitimate and healthy growth amongst the people, not in the slightest degree inconsistent with a feeling of loyalty to the British Crown. It is only a fulfil-

ment of the prophecy uttered by Macaulay in connection with India.

But, if the rulers of India will not see the reasonableness of the movement, why should not the Indians? It is true that, to a certain extent, the introduction of British rule was possible by reason of internal dissensions but it is the peculiar province, as also the privilege, of Great Britain to bring together the two great communities in India, and to leave to them an heritage for which she would receive not only the gratitude of the millions in India, but the unstinted admiration of the whole world. It behoves, then, both communities to seize the opportunity offered to them, and to sink mutual jealousies and dissensions for their common good. Better far, that two brothers should suffer at the hands of each other, than that a third party should step into the breach and gain an advantage over them. We would ask those who see these lines, no matter who they be, to join with us in the prayer that the present agitation in Bengal, which has in it the germs of the unification of the different communities, may grow in strength, and that the people of Dacca or elsewhere, whether Hindus or Mahomedans, may have the good sense to refrain from doing anything that may mar the glorious possibilities that are opened up to the people of India.

‘Divide and Rule’

*Indian Opinion*, 4 Nov. 1905

<sup>1</sup> Farical show

### 132. THE RUIN OF INDIA'S INDUSTRIES

Remarkable are the attempts made by and on behalf of the Government to befog people's minds and take them away from the main point by raising side issues and discovering or professing to discover flaws in evidence produced in support of the main point. It does not suit the Government to admit that its history is a history of the ruin of India's industries and India's manhood. One of such recent attempts is to discredit

the oft-told story in the press and on the platform about the cutting off by the weavers of their own thumbs in order to escape the East India Company's myrmidons who sought to compel them to wind silk. If the weaver has no thumb he cannot do the work expected of him. And the way the history has been discredited is by digging out the credentials of William Bolts on the strength of whose evidence the late Romesh Chandra Dutt first made the statement regarding the cutting off of thumbs.

The writer of the refutation is not able to say that William Bolts gave false evidence, but he says that William Bolts had no character to keep and that therefore his evidence is not worthy of credence. And he further says that he was a dismissed servant of the Company under its resolution which described him as 'a very unworthy and unprofitable servant of the Company, his conduct has been distinguished by a tenacious adherence to those pernicious principles relative to the rights of inland trade, in which he appears to have been so conspicuously oppressive'. Who does not know the tricks of pettifogging lawyers to discredit witnesses by proving their bad character as if a man with a bad character was ever incapable of making a true statement?

I make bold to say that whatever the character of William Bolts, his testimony about the cutting of thumbs need not be discredited unless it can be otherwise disproved, and there has been nothing brought forward to show that that testimony is unworthy to be believed. On the contrary, what is more likely than that weavers in order to escape harrowing and continuous oppression would once for all render themselves physically unfit to do the work imposed upon them under unbearable punishment? After all, the evidence of William Bolts is only part of the story of the ruin of India's industries told by Romesh Chandra Dutt with such deadly effect and supported by the evidence of a variety of witnesses, the cumulative effect of whose evidence becomes irresistible. The main point is whether the industry was or was not ruined with the greatest deliberation. If it was, it makes little difference if the evidence of one witness is rejected and it will lie ill in the mouth of the criminal to say that out of a hundred witnesses one has told an untruth. But as I have said in this instance, there is nothing

relevant brought forward to show that William Bolts's testimony is not to be believed.

Let me however put before the reader a few relevant extracts from Dutt's first volume of the *Economic History of India*. He says

It will appear from the facts stated in the last two chapters that large portions of the Indian population were engaged in various industries down to the first decade of the nineteenth century. Weaving was still the national industry of the people, millions of women eked out the family income by their earnings from spinning, and dyeing, tanning and working in metals also gave employment to millions. It was not, however, the policy of the East India Company to foster Indian industries. It has been stated in a previous chapter that, as early as 1769, the Directors wished the manufacture of raw silk to be encouraged in Bengal and that of silk fabrics discouraged. And they also directed that silk-winders should be made to work in the Company's factories and prohibited from working outside 'under severe penalties by the authority of the Government. This mandate had its desired effect. The manufacture of silk and cotton goods declined in India and the people who had exported these goods to the markets of Europe and Asia in previous centuries began to import them in increasing quantities.

So much was the importation of silk and cotton goods from England stimulated by these methods that whereas in 1794 it was £156, in 1813 it rose to £108,824. In 1813 the Company's charter was renewed and important evidence was taken at the enquiry prior to renewal. 'In respect of Indian manufactures,' says the author, 'they the Commons sought to discover how they could be replaced by British manufactures, and how British industries could be promoted at the expense of Indian industries.'

The commercial policy of England is thus described by Henry St George Tucker

What is the commercial policy which we have adopted in this country with relation to India? The silk manufactures and its piece-goods made of silk and cotton intermixed have long since been excluded altogether from our markets, and of late partly in consequence of the operation of a duty of 67 per cent, but chiefly from

the effect of superior machinery, the cotton fabrics, which hitherto constituted the staple of India, have not only been displaced in this country, but we actually export our cotton manufactures to supply a part of the consumption of our Asiatic possessions. India is thus reduced from the state of a manufacturing to that of an agricultural country.

Here is another testimony of the same character by H. H. Wilson

It is also a melancholy instance of the wrong done to India by the country on which she has become dependent. It was stated in evidence (in 1813) that the cotton and silk goods of India up to the period could be sold for a profit in the British market at a price from 50 to 60 per cent lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70 and 80 per cent, on their value, or by positive prohibition. Had this not been the case, had not such prohibitive duties and decrees existed, the mills of Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped in their outset and could scarcely have been again set in motion even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufacture. Had India been independent she would have retaliated, would have imposed prohibitive duties upon British goods and would thus have preserved her own productive industry from annihilation. This act of self-defence was not permitted to her, she was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced upon her without paying any duty and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms.

According to Thomas Munro 'the Company's servants assembled the principal weavers and placed a guard over them until they entered into engagements to supply the Company only'

The author then proceeds

When once a weaver accepted an advance he seldom got out of his liability. A peon was placed over him to quicken his deliveries if he delayed and he was liable to be prosecuted in the courts of justice. The sending of a peon meant a fine of one anna (about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  d) a day on the weaver, and the peon was armed with a rattan, which was not unoften used to good purpose. Fine was sometimes



imposed on the weavers, and their brass utensils were seized for its recovery. The whole weaving population of villages were thus held in subjection to the Company's factories. ... The control under which the weaver population was held was not merely a matter of practice, but was legalized by Regulations. It was provided that a weaver who had received advances from the Company 'shall on no account give to any other persons whatever, European or Native, either the labour or the produce engaged to the Company'; that on his failing to deliver the stipulated cloths, 'the Commercial Resident shall be at liberty to place peons upon him in order to quicken his deliveries'; that on his selling his cloths to others, the weaver 'shall be liable to be prosecuted in the Dewani Adalat'; that 'weavers, possessed of more than one loom, and entertaining one or more workmen, shall be subject to a penalty of 35 per cent on the stipulated price of every piece of cloth that they may fail to deliver according to the written agreement'; that landlords and tenants 'are enjoined not to hinder the Commercial Residents or their officers from access to weavers'; and that they 'are strictly prohibited from behaving with disrespect to the Commercial Residents' of the Company.

Is it to be wondered at if weavers living under such intolerable restraint broke loose from it by cutting off their own thumbs? To revive an industry that was thus deliberately destroyed and which supplemented the resources of millions of people is the sacred duty of every Indian who loves his country and should be considered a privilege by every Englishman who would repent of the grave wrong done to a great country by his ancestors. But instead of repentance, we see a painful persistence in the policy initiated 150 years ago and an equally painful effort made by every means possible to bolster up the wrong.

'Off the Trail'

*Young India*, 19 Apr. 1928

### 133 IMMORALITY OF THE SYSTEM

'This Indian Empire was conceived in immorality, for it was to perpetuate the exploitation of India's resources that it was

founded. The pages of history written by Englishmen amply prove the assertion that no fraud was considered too much, no force too frightful by Englishmen, to gain the end. There is perhaps not an inch of ground lawfully acquired by or for the British crown in India.

The rule is nurtured by immoral means. English statesmen assure us that it is the British bayonet that keeps the Empire free from attack both from without and within.

It is supported by revenues derived from immoral sources. I have sufficiently demonstrated the hideous immorality, because inhumanity, of the salt tax. The immorality of the drink and drug revenue is self-demonstrated.

The immorality of the land revenue is not self-demonstrated. But those who have followed the Bardoli agitation, who have studied the so-called revenue laws and their administration, cannot fail to perceive the immorality of the system. I call the revenue laws so-called because they give arbitrary powers to revenue officers whose decisions are not subject to judicial control. This land revenue, like the salt tax, presses most heavily upon the poor *ryot* whether under the *ryotwari* system or the permanent system. How it oppresses the peasant under the *ryotwari* system we saw in Bardoli and recently in Matar and Mehemedabad. The permanent settlement crushes the *ryot* more than those affected by the *ryotwari* system. That the *ryot* himself is partly to blame for his woes I have no hesitation in admitting. But that fact is irrelevant to the present consideration.

There is no inherent or independent right belonging to the State to tax the land, whether it be considered to be the State property or the individual's. The State has no more right to exact its toll from land under any circumstance than the owner of an ox has a right to exact work from it irrespective of its capacity. That there is a kind of classification of land and some regulations about remissions, etc., is no answer to the charge here made. The claim here made is that in the vast majority of cases the *ryot* is wholly unable to pay any tax. In shaping its taxation policy a wise State will always take note of the citizen's habits, customs and even his weaknesses. This Government had no time for such consideration. It had its fixed minimum to exact anyhow; and so in the words of the

late Lord Salisbury the lancet had to be applied where there was yet any blood to be drawn.

So much about some of the visible sources of revenue. The invisible sources are equally tainted if not much more so. The unconscionable forced inflation of the rupee has by a stroke of the pen drained India of millions. The favoured treatment of British cloth in a variety of unseen ways drains India of sixty crores of rupees annually, leaving behind partial unemployment of the starving millions

Thus the Government trades upon our vices and exacts payment by questionable methods principally from those who are least able to make it.

There is therefore no way open to the people save to end a system whose very foundations are immoral. Let us therefore pray and work for the destruction of this demonstrably immoral system and for ending it take the boldest risks consistently with the national creed or policy (as the case may be) of non-violence.

'The Immoral Foundation'  
*Young India*, 10 Apr 1930

#### 134. IMPERIALISM, EXPLOITATION, AND FREEDOM

Segaon,

December 4, 1939

Mr. Chamberlain<sup>1</sup> is reported to have said, 'If imperialism means the assertion of racial superiority, suppression of political and economic freedom of other peoples, the exploitation of the resources of other countries for the benefit of an imperialist country, then I say these are not the characteristics of this country' This is pleasing to the ear but does not square with facts. The policy adopted in Kenya, the clove business in Zanzibar, the Ottawa Pact, not to speak of the Dominions which exploit the so-called uncivilized races of the earth, do not show as if the imperial spirit was dead. Coming nearer home, is the Paramountcy over Indian Princes consistent with even elementary democracy, let alone death of imperialism? Princes

are made and unmade not for India's good. Millions of Indians remain under undiluted autocracy by reason of the Paramountcy.

Also I fail to see why Britain's intention about India should be dependent upon Muslim, Hindu or any other opinion. The only opinion that counts is India's opinion, not even the Congress opinion. India's opinion can only be ascertained by the free vote of her people. The only true and democratic method is to ascertain their will through adult suffrage or any agreed equivalent. So far as the Congress is concerned, the people of Princes' India should be represented precisely on the same footing as those of British India. The Muslims and other accepted minorities may be represented by separate electorates, if necessary, and in the exact proportion of their numbers. They will determine what is required for their protection. In all matters of common interest a composite majority decision should prevail. If a better way than a Constituent Assembly can be found for knowing the will of the people, so far as I know, the Congress will accept it without hesitation. Neither the size of the country nor the illiteracy of the masses should be a bar against adult suffrage. The election campaign will itself be sufficient education for the purpose of broadly knowing the popular will.

The declaration of British policy about India is a purely moral issue, for freedom-loving India has neither the will nor the capacity to resort to armed revolt. Nevertheless, it is her right to know Britain's will about her. I am aware that Britain can impress men and money from India treated as her dependency, but she can get moral weight on her side only from an India conscious of her freedom. I am anxious, as a friend of Britain bound by many personal ties, that she should come out victorious not because of her superiority in the use of arms but because of her will to be just all along the line. She will then have the true friendship and sympathy of millions of people all over the world who have become sick of the wanton waste of precious life and of the palpable lies disseminated to sustain greed and hunger for dominion.

Statement to the *News Chronicle*

*The Hindu*, 7 Dec. 1939

*Harijan*, 9 Dec. 1939

<sup>1</sup> The British Prime Minister

135 THE CAUSE OF THE OPPRESSED

[6 April 1947]<sup>1</sup>

My heart is always with the oppressed peoples of the world, and I have full sympathy with the cause for which the people of Viet Nam are fighting

Message for People of Viet Nam

*The Hindu* 10 Apr 1947

<sup>1</sup> This was sent through Tran Van Hieu, leader of the Viet Nam Delegation to the Inter-African Relations Conference, who called on Gandhi on 6 April 1947

## § 4 The Congress

136 SHIRAJ AND THE TRUE CONGRESSMAN

You do not know what we (Congressmen) are. I will tell you. One well-known Congressman went to a comfortable house. He was not invited there. He had not written either to the owner. On reaching there he was asked by the owner, 'Where are you going to stay?' This Congressman said, 'Here of course, where else do you think?' The owner was unprepared for this favour. But he had to make the best of the job though he never omitted to speak about the meanness of this guest who had imposed himself upon him. He even made opportunities for delicately insulting this Congressman who was too far gone to notice the insults. I must tell you that the unwilling host was not a Congressman.

ii)

Another Congressman imposed himself on a Congress worker without notice. He had a large company with him and felt mightily offended when he could not get all the convenience that he had expected. We Congressmen have come to think so much of ourselves that we presume we have a right to demand and receive the best service without the least cost.

These incidents were related to me by an earnest Congress worker with so much pain that I thought I should place them on record and draw a moral from them. Let no one, however, wear the cap unless it fits him. The incidents have been purposely defaced. I do not know the other side. No one, therefore, need waste his time in a vain effort to identify them.

The thing is to avoid copying examples quoted. A Congressman to be true must be above suspicion. Let him remember that he is out to gain *swaraj* by 'legitimate and peaceful means'. We have been a long time getting it. The obvious inference is that we have not at all adopted even in our mutual intercourse means that can bear scrutiny. Indeed, a correspondent once suggested that, whilst we must be truthful and peaceful towards opponents, we need not be that in our mutual dealings. But experience shows that we cannot be truthful and peaceful on some occasions and for some people only, if we are not so on all occasions. And if we will not be considerate towards one another, we shall not be considerate to the world outside. All the prestige acquired by the Congress will be gone if we are not scrupulously clean in our dealings within or without in every detail. Pounds will take care of themselves if we could but take care of the pennies.

A true Congressman is a true servant. He ever gives, never wants service. He is easily satisfied so long as his own comfort is concerned. He is always content to take a back seat. He is never communal or provincial. His country is his paramount consideration. He is brave to a fault because he has shed all earthly ambition, fear of Death himself. And he is generous because he is brave, forgiving because he is humble and conscious of his own failings and limitations.

If such Congressmen are rare, *swaraj* is far off and we must revise our creed. The fact that we have not got *swaraj* as yet is proof presumptive that we have not as many true Congressmen as we want. Be that however as it may, if I have placed on record the ugly incidents which can be multiplied, I must bear grateful testimony to the fact that there are nameless Congressmen, no doubt few today, but daily growing in number, who fulfil all the tests I have mentioned. They are unknown to fame. It is well that they are. Work would be impossible if they wanted to shine in the limelight and expected

honourable mention in Congress dispatches. Those who obtain even Victoria Crosses are by no means and necessarily always the bravest humanitarians.

To the end of time the real heroes of the world will be never known. Their deeds remain imperishable. They are their own reward. Such men are the real scavengers without whom the earth will be a plague spot not worth living in. It has been my lot to meet such men and women in the Congress ranks. But for them the Congress will not be an institution to which it would be a pride to belong. There is no doubt at the present moment a hunt for offices and an unhealthy competition to capture the Congress. It is a disease which has come to the surface and it is bound to give place in the course of time to health. That will not happen if the Congress becomes anything but an institution for hard, honest and selfless toil.

Let the Congress be ever so democratic, but democracy must not be brag and bluster, a passport to receiving service from people. If *Vox populi* is to be *Vox dei*, it must be the voice of honesty, bravery, gentleness, humility and complete self-sacrifice. A woman is to guide the Congress next year. Woman is nothing if she is not self-sacrifice and purity personified. Let us men and women of the Congress humble ourselves, purify our hearts and be worthy representatives of the dumb millions.

'A True Congressman'

*Young India*, 19 Nov. 1925

### 137. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE CONGRESS

[5 September 1934]

Dear Vallabhbhai,

After much deliberation and discussions with friends who have been to Wardha recently, I have come to the conclusion that the best interests of the Congress and the nation will be served by my completely severing all official or physical connection with the Congress, including the original membership. This does not mean that I cease to take any interest in an organization with which I have been intimately connected

since 1920 and which I have worshipped since my youth. In spite of all I have recently said about the corruption that has crept into the organization, it still remains, in my opinion, the most powerful and the most representative national organization in the country. It has a history of uninterrupted noble service and sacrifice from its inception. Its progress has been unbroken and steady. It has weathered storms as no other institution in the country has. It has commanded the largest measure of sacrifice of which any country would be proud. It has today the largest number of self-sacrificing men and women of unimpeachable character.

It is not with a light heart that I leave this great organization. But I feel that my remaining in it any longer is likely to do more harm than good. I miss at this juncture the association and advice of Jawaharlal<sup>1</sup> who is bound to be the rightful helmsman of the organization in the near future. I have, therefore, kept before me his great spirit. And I feel that whilst his great affection for me would want to keep me in the Congress, his reason would endorse the step I have taken. And since a great organization cannot be governed by affections but by cold reason, it is better for me to retire from a field where my presence results in arresting full play of reason. Hence in leaving the organization I feel that I am in no sense deserting one who is much more than a comrade and whom no amount of political differences will ever separate from me.

Nor by retiring at this critical juncture am I less true to Babu Rajendra Prasad who will in all probability be the President of the forthcoming Congress, and who unlike Jawaharlal shares most of my ideals and whose sacrifice for the nation, judged whether in quality or quantity, is not to be excelled.

Then there is the Congress Parliamentary Board which would perhaps not have come into being, unless I had encouraged its formation with my whole heart. It supplies a want that was felt by many staunch and true Congressmen. It was necessary, therefore, to bring it into being. Such services as I am capable of rendering will still be at its disposal as at any Congressman's. It must command the full support of all Congressmen who have no insuperable objection to the entry of Congressmen into the existing legislatures. I should be sorry if the Board lost a single vote because of my withdrawal.



I fear none of the consequences dreaded by some friends, for I know my ground. A tree is no more hurt by a ripe fruit falling from it than would the Congress be by my going out of it. Indeed the fruit will be dead weight, if it did not fall when it was fully ripe. Mine is that condition. I feel that I am a dead weight on the Congress now.

There is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself. My presence more and more estranges the intelligentsia from the Congress. I feel that my policies fail to convince their reason, though strange as it may appear, I do nothing that does not satisfy my own reason. But my reason takes me in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take, if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me. No leader can expect greater loyalty and devotion than I have received from intellectually-minded Congressmen even when they have protested and signified their disapproval of the policies I have laid before the Congress. I feel that for me any more to draw upon this loyalty and devotion is to put an undue strain upon them. I wish that those who strongly disapprove of my method would outvote me and compel my retirement. I have tried to reach that position but I have failed. They would cling to me till the end. The only way I can require such loyalty is by voluntary retirement. I cannot work in opposition when there are some fundamental differences between the Congress intelligentsia and me. Ever since my entry into public life I have never acted in that manner. . . .

Then there is the growing group of socialists. Jawaharlal is their undisputed leader. I know pretty well what he wants and stands for. He claims to examine everything in a scientific spirit. He is courage personified. He has many years of service in front of him. He has an indomitable faith in his mission. The socialist group represents his views more or less, though probably their mode of execution is not exactly his. That group is bound to grow in influence and importance. I have welcomed the group. Many of them are respected and self-sacrificing co-workers. With all this, I have fundamental differences with them on the programme published in their authorized pamphlets. But I would not, by reason of the moral

pressure I may be able to exert, suppress the spread of the ideas propounded in their literature. My remaining in the Congress would amount to the exercise of such pressure. I may not interfere with free expression of those ideas, however distasteful some of them may be to me. . . .

For me to dominate the Congress in spite of these fundamental differences is almost a species of violence which I must refrain from. Their reason must be set free at any cost. Having discovered this undisputable fact, I would be disloyal to the Congress if, even at the risk of losing all my reputation, I did not leave the Congress.

But there is no danger to my reputation or that of the Congress, if I leave only to serve it better in thought, word and deed. I do not leave in anger or in a huff, nor yet in disappointment. I have no disappointment in me. I see before me a bright future for the country. Everything will go well, if we are true to ourselves. I have no other programme before me save the Congress programme now before the country. . . .

In this and various other ways I would love to serve the Congress in my own humble manner. Thus living in complete detachment, I hope, I shall come closer to the Congress. Congressmen will then accept my services without being embarrassed or oppressed.

One word to those who have given me their whole-hearted devotion in thought, word and deed in the pursuit of the common goal. My physical withdrawal from the Congress is not to be understood to mean an invitation to them to withdraw. They will remain in the Congress fold so long as the Congress needs them and work out such common ideals as they have assimilated.

Yours,  
BAPU

Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel  
*Mahatma*, Vol III, pp 386-8

<sup>1</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru

## 138. FULL RECOGNITION OF THE CONGRESS

Sevaon,

January 20, 1938

My ambition is to see the Congress recognized as the one and only party that can successfully resist the Government and deliver the goods. It is the only party which, from its inception, has represented all minorities.

If the British Government recognize this unique position of the Congress they will not hesitate to postpone inauguration of the Federation<sup>1</sup> till they have satisfied the Congress. It should not be difficult to do so if, before taking in the Princes, elementary rights of the States people are guaranteed and their representation takes place through election. In my opinion a crisis of the first magnitude may be precipitated if Federation is sought to be imposed.

The opposition to the Act will still remain even if the present difficulty is got over in the manner suggested. Peace, humanly speaking, can only be assured when a constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly supplants the present Act. Anyway, once the right status of the Congress is fully recognized the rest becomes easy.

This is my personal view which I have not discussed with any of my co-workers.

M K GANDHI

'A Message'<sup>2</sup>

CW 7791

1

<sup>1</sup> As proposed in the Government of India Act, 1935<sup>2</sup> This was written 'For Lord Lothian and responsible statesmen only'

## 139. NEED TO BUILD UP FROM THE BOTTOM

On Train, Bardoli Wardha,

January 9, 1942

If the Congress were an organization with a military bias, there is no doubt that today it would be a full-fledged military unit, every member becoming trained to be an efficient sol-

dier. Fortunately for India and humanity, the Congress is not such an organization. No other purely national organization is or can be in the India of today. Fortunately again for India and humanity, the Congress has pledged itself since 1920 to win India's freedom through non-violent means. But up to now it has been largely a debating society, offering civil disobedience at intervals and all the time only playing with its vital programme of construction. At one time every Congressman was expected to create something for the nation. He or she was to spin for the nation. Congressmen would not respond, and the clause about spinning was dropped. There were other items too which every Congressman was to work. But he has not done so to the extent expected. The moment has now come for him to make a definite choice. The only programme before him is to become a servant or soldier of peace. A soldier of peace, unlike the one of the sword, has to give all his spare time to the promotion of peace alike in war time as in peace time. His work in peace time is both a measure of prevention of, as also that of preparation for, war time.

If then I was a Congressman with a vote, I would vote, as an emergency measure, for requiring every Congressman now on the Congress register or to come hereafter to possess the minimum qualifications for working the Constructive Programme. It would be wrong to remind me that the Congress should retain its democratic character. It will not lose it because, of its own motion, it becomes an efficient working body which anybody undertaking to obey its discipline and conditions of membership may join. The Congress will cease to be popular, if it cannot deserve popularity in times of stress. If it cannot provide work for the workless and hungry, if it cannot protect the people from depredations or teach them how to face them, if it cannot help them in the face of danger, it will lose its prestige and popularity. No person or corporation can live long on his or its capital. The latter has to circulate and multiply itself.

The Congress has become popular because it has been foremost in fighting imperialism. Today the old way is of no avail. Nobody thinks of mass revolt at the present moment. The best, quickest and most efficient way is to build up from

the bottom. The psychological moment has come. 'Back to the villages!' has become a necessity from every point of view. Now is the time to decentralize production and distribution. Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work. As far as I know at the present moment this is common ground between the rulers and the people.

Let every Congressman answer for himself whether he will be a soldier or servant of peace or whether he will become a non-entity unwilling to take his place in building up *swaraj*.

'Peace Organization'

*Harijan*, 18 Jan. 1942

#### 140. THE CONGRESS AND CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

On the way to Kashi,  
January 19, 1942

Will not the working of the Constructive Programme bring Congressmen into conflict with the Government? This was one of the many questions asked at the meeting of the principal members of the A.I.C.C. I addressed in Wardha on the 17th. My answer was that the whole Programme was so conceived as to avoid conflict. Of course the most innocent activity may be so manipulated as to provoke conflict. I expect every Congress worker to do his best to avoid it. But there is no help for it, if the Government prohibit such activities because they are undertaken by Congressmen who believe that the working of the Constructive Programme will bring *swaraj*. That is the only non-violent way to achieve the end.

*Swaraj* by non-violent means must come from the creative effort of those who desire it. The Government should welcome every such effort, unless they want to prevent even cent per cent non-violent movement. In that case conflict will become unavoidable. But I am of opinion that no conflict is possible, at any rate while the war lasts, unless the Congress workers want or provoke it. They have to work, work and work. They will make no speeches or demonstrations in doing their con-

structive work. As I have already said, today most of the items of constructive work happen to be—like feeding and clothing – common cause between the Government and the people.

‘Constructive Programme and Government’

*Harjan*, 25 Jan. 1942

#### 141. THE CONGRESS AND NON-VIOLENCE

Bhangi Nivas, New Delhi,<sup>1</sup>

May 4, 1947

I admit that our struggle for freedom had not been purely non-violent. Had all Congressmen honestly followed true non-violence, we would not have been today in a state of utter confusion. It is becoming clear to me day by day that what we regarded as non-violent fight was not really so. Otherwise the dragon of communalism would not have raised its head amongst us; untouchability would have been a thing of the past, distinctions between employer and employee would have ceased to exist and both would have performed body-labour alike without any distinction. Nowhere have we heard it happen the way the honour of our daughters and sisters is being violated in broad daylight in our country. Had we followed the path of truth and non-violence we would not have seen human hearts so devoid of humanity. and society would have been well-organized and without any trace of animosity. Today we do not see a single good sign. Everywhere Congressmen are being condemned and people seem to have lost faith in them. The Muslim League may not trust us, but even the States have become indifferent towards us. You and, maybe, I too, are to blame for this. Had we followed truth, non-violence and sacrifice one hundred per cent, not only the masses but even children would have revered us. Instead the atmosphere is quite different. Even now we should realize our mistake and retrace our steps. Otherwise sixty years' glorious record of the Congress will be wiped out within a decade.

Unless we kindle the flame of unadulterated non-violence and truth within ourselves we shall not realize our goal of

complete independence. With that light kindled within us, the tendency towards violence will automatically vanish and riots will be brought under control.

Nevertheless I do not presume that the police will have absolutely no place in a vast country like India inhabited by such a diversity of people. In a situation like this, if we are unable to manage things without the aid of the army, how can we say that we will do without the police? No doubt I cherish a fond vision that we may be able to do without the police, for I would call them not 'police' but 'social reformers'. They will be the servants of the people, not their masters.

Just as in training for violence one learns to kill, similarly in adopting non-violence one should learn the art of dying. There is no place at all for fear in non-violence. Not only that, one has to develop the spirit of sacrifice to such a high degree that one would not hesitate to sacrifice one's family, property and even one's life. A votary of non-violence should fear God alone. One resorts to violence to protect one's physical body. But we should realize that the body is perishable and it is the soul which really matters. And in order to protect the honour of one's soul there is no alternative to non-violence.

There is no school where such non-violence can be taught. Our non-violence is tested only when we act with courage. Today we are being put to this test and in my opinion we have failed in the test. Otherwise every four-anna member of the Congress should have been engaged in quelling the riots or should have died in the attempt. Instead they dare not save their neighbours from being butchered. I have even heard of instances where people ran away in panic to save their lives leaving behind their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters in peril. I shudder when I hear such tales. What cowardice on our part! A truly non-violent person should brave the danger and prove his worth. The courage of a non-violent person is many times superior to the courage of a violent person. But who listens to me? I do, however hope to meet death, if anyone should come to kill me, without a trace of anger, calmly, with a smile, and all the while remembering my chosen God. I believe that God will grant me this strength. If there is any shortcoming or ego in me its proof will be found in the hour of my death. I used to talk about living up to 125

years but I no longer have the desire because every day I see only falsehood and treachery all round me. I am, however, growing daily stronger in my conviction that God will bless me with a death befitting a non-violent person

'A Talk' (G )

*Biharni Komi Agman*, pp 292-4

<sup>1</sup> A talk with Rajendra Prasad, Amrit Kaur and Harekrishna Mahtab

## 142 THE CONGRESS AND THE SOCIALISTS

New Delhi,

June 3, 1947

I ask the Socialists if they want to capture the Congress or to serve it. If they want to capture it, it is better that they should remain out. The Congress is a great organization, but no organization can live only on its past. It must always keep abreast of times and attract new blood and justify itself. If the Socialists come into the Congress as *khidmatgars*,<sup>1</sup> and I hope they do want to come as such, they are welcome, for they cannot always remain a party which always complains and refuses to assume responsibility. When I use the Congress platform to advocate any views, I do not try to utilize it to damage the institution. Whether I remain in the Congress or outside, I cannot imagine being ever disloyal to it.

Speech at Congress Working Committee Meeting<sup>2</sup>

AICC File No 1499 P, 1946-8

Courtesy: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

<sup>1</sup> Soldiers of non-violence

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Kripalani, who had been holding discussions with the leaders of the Socialist Party with a view to minimizing the differences existing within the Congress, had placed before the Committee a memorandum submitted by them. The Committee were of the opinion that the President should continue the discussions and place before the Committee any agreed proposal. Gandhi was requested to express his opinion on the question.



## 143. DISBANDING THE CONGRESS

New Delhi,

January 29, 1948

Though split into two, India having attained political Independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e., as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns. The struggle for the ascendancy of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons, the A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organization and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh under the following rules with power to alter them as occasion may demand.

Every Panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit.

Two such contiguous Panchayats shall form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves.

When there are one hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect from among themselves a second grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of Panchayats electing second grade leader after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups.

(As the final formation of provinces or districts is still in a state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into Provincial or District Councils and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been vested in the group or groups that may have been formed at any given time. It should be

noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India.)

1. Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of *khadi* made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A.I.S.A. and must be a teetotaler. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family and must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex.

2. He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

3. He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.

4. He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

5. He shall organize the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.

6. He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill health and disease among them.

7. He shall organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of *Nayee Talim*, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

8. He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters' roll are duly entered therein.

9. He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification to acquire it for getting the right of franchise.

10. For the above purposes and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty.

The Sangh shall affiliate the following autonomous bodies.

1. A.I.S.A.
2. A.I.V.I.A.
3. Hindustani Talimi Sangh
4. Harijan Sevak Sangh
5. Goseva Sangh

## FINANCE

The Sangh shall raise finances for the fulfilment of its mission from among the villagers and others, special stress being laid on collection of poor man's pice.

M. K. G.

'His Last Will and Testament'<sup>1</sup>

*Haryan*, 15 Feb 1948

<sup>1</sup> The above draft constitution for a reconstituted Congress was designated owing to Gandhi's assassination his last will and testament.

## § 5. Constitution-Making

144 SHRIJI AND CONSTITUTION-MAKING

Satyagraha Ashram,  
Sabarmati,  
June 10, 1928

Dear Friend,

I must apologize to you for not having acknowledged your telegram. And meanwhile I have your letter<sup>1</sup> before me. Since receiving your telegram, I have been having cuttings from *The Statesman*, which I am keeping on my desk. I have read the first two articles with interest. I have not yet reached the rest. The fact is I hardly get any time to attend to anything outside my beat.

If I can usefully take part in the discussion that you have inaugurated, I shall not fail to do so. But I confess to you that neither the Statutory Commission nor constitution-making interests me much. I am concentrating my attention upon the means of attainment of *swaraj*. Neither the Statutory Com-

mission nor constitution-making appeals to me as part of the means

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Moore Esq  
Editor,  
'The Statesman'  
6 Chowringhee  
Calcutta

Letter to Arthur Moore  
SN 13411

<sup>1</sup> The addressee had written: 'Is it not possible that we could collectively clarify our ideas by a friendly discussion during the course of this summer and perhaps arrive at some agreement or approach to agreement as to the lines of a future constitution?' My idea is that this discussion should be conducted without regard to the Statutory Commission's aim to bring into it both those who are willing to co-operate with the Commission and those who are not.

#### 145 THE LOGIC OF CONSTITUTION-MAKING.

Satyagraha Ashram Sabarmati,  
September 8 1928

Dear Friend

I have your letter. I hope that your propaganda will succeed in making your scheme popular. When you do come, you shall certainly discuss it with me to your heart's content.

With reference to the constitution I agree that it is entirely Western. But I have not bothered about its being Western or Eastern. If we have a true awakening in us we shall be able to turn it as we will and make it serve our purpose instead of becoming slaves to it. The constitution is the logical outcome of the institutions we have at present. An Assembly man could not give any other constitution than what has been produced, and, if we succeed in getting the logical result of the present mode of Government of India and if it does not suit the genius of the people, you may depend upon it that they will destroy it and raise another into being. What is necessary is to remove the force that is weighing us down. And seeing that we have

a tolerable agreement upon a passable constitution, it would be folly in my opinion to reject that constitution. Such is my justification for whole-heartedly recommending it to the country.

Yours sincerely,

M. Zafarulmulk  
Lucknow

Letter to M Zafarulmulk  
SN 13512

#### 146. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Allahabad,  
November 19, 1939

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has compelled me to study, among other things, the implications of a Constituent Assembly. When he first introduced it<sup>1</sup> in the Congress resolutions, I reconciled myself to it because of my belief in his superior knowledge of the technicalities of democracy. But I was not free from scepticism. Hard facts have, however, made me a convert and, for that reason perhaps, more enthusiastic than Jawaharlal himself. For I seem to see in it a remedy, which Jawaharlal may not, for our communal and other distempers, besides being a vehicle for mass political and other education.

The more criticism I see of the scheme, the more enamoured I become of it. It will be the surest index to the popular feeling. It will bring out the best and the worst in us. Illiteracy does not worry me. I would plump for unadulterated adult franchise for both men and women, i.e., I would put them all on the register of voters. It is open to them not to exercise it if they do not wish to. I would give separate vote to the Muslims; but, without giving separate vote, I would, though reluctantly, give reservation, if required, to every real minority according to its numerical strength.

Thus the Constituent Assembly provides the easiest method of arriving at a just solution of the communal problem. Today we are unable to say with mathematical precision who repre-

sents whom. Though the Congress is admittedly the oldest representative organization on the widest scale, it is open to political and semi-political organizations to question, as they do question, its overwhelmingly representative character. The Muslim League is undoubtedly the largest organization representing Muslims, but several Muslim bodies—by no means all insignificant—deny its claim to represent them. But the Constituent Assembly will represent all communities in their exact proportion. Except it there is no other way of doing full justice to rival claims. Without it there can be no finality to communal and other claims.

Again, the Constituent Assembly alone can produce a constitution indigenous to the country and truly and fully representing the will of the people. Undoubtedly such a constitution will not be ideal, but it will be real, however imperfect it may be in the estimation of the theorists or legal luminaries. Self-government to be self-government has merely to reflect the will of the people who are to govern themselves. If they are not prepared for it, they will make a hash of it. I can conceive the possibility of a people fitting themselves for right government through a series of wrong experiments, but I cannot conceive a people governing themselves rightly through a government imposed from without, even as the fabled jackdaw could not walk like a peacock with feathers borrowed from his elegant companion. A diseased person has a prospect of getting well by personal effort. He cannot borrow health from others.

The risks of the experiment are admitted. There is likely to be impersonation. Unscrupulous persons will mislead the illiterate masses into voting for wrong men and women. These risks have to be run, if we are to evolve something true and big. The Constituent Assembly, if it comes into being—as I hope it will—as a result of an honourable settlement between us and the British people, the combined wit of the best men of the two nations will produce an Assembly that will reflect fairly truly the best mind of India. Therefore the success of the experiment at the present stage of India's history depends upon the intention of the British statesmen to part with power without engaging India in a deadly unorganized rebellion. For I know that India has become impatient. I am painfully

conscious of the fact that India is not yet ready for non-violent civil disobedience on a mass scale. If, therefore, I cannot persuade the Congress to await the time when non-violent action is possible, I have no desire to live to see a dog-fight between the two communities. I know for certain that if I cannot discover a method of non-violent action or inaction to the satisfaction of the Congress and there is no communal adjustment, nothing on earth can prevent an outbreak of violence resulting for the time being in anarchy and red ruin. I hold that it is the duty of all communities and Englishmen to prevent such a catastrophe.

The only way out is a Constituent Assembly. I have given my own opinion on it, but I am not tied down to the details. When I was nearly through with this article, I got the following wire from Syed Abdulla Brelvi.<sup>2</sup>

Considerable misapprehensions among minorities (about) Constituent Assembly. Strongly urge clarification details, franchise, composition, methods arriving decision.

I think I have said sufficient in the foregoing to answer Syed Sahab's question. By minorities he has Muslims principally in mind as represented by the Muslim League. If once the proposition that all communities desire a charter of independence framed by a Constituent Assembly and that they will not be satisfied with anything else is accepted, the settling of details surely becomes easy. Any other method must lead to an imposed constitution mostly undemocratic. It would mean an indefinite prolongation of imperialistic rule sustained by the help of those who will not accept the fully democratic method of a Constituent Assembly.

The principal hindrance is undoubtedly the British Government. If they can summon a Round Table Conference as they propose to do after the war, they can surely summon a Constituent Assembly subject to safeguards to the satisfaction of minorities. The expression 'satisfaction of minorities' may be regarded as vague. It can be defined beforehand by agreement. The question thus resolves itself into whether the British Government desire to part with power and open a new chapter in their own history. I have already shown that the ques-

tion of the Princes is a red herring across the path. European interests are absolutely safe so long as they are not in conflict with 'the interests of India'. I think this expression finds place in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact.<sup>3</sup>

Look at the question from any standpoint you like, it will be found that the way to democratic *swaraj* lies only through a properly constituted Assembly, call it by whatever name you like. All resources must, therefore, be exhausted to reach the Constituent Assembly before direct action is thought of. A stage may be reached when direct action may become the necessary prelude to the Constituent Assembly. That stage is not yet.

'The Only Way'

*Harijan*, 25 Nov. 1939

<sup>1</sup> At the Congress Working Committee meeting on 14 September 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Editor, *The Bombay Chronicle*.

<sup>3</sup> Of March 5, 1931.

#### 147. WORLD FEDERATION, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND NON-VIOLENCE

[Before 22 April 1940]

Q. I have heard it said on behalf of Britain, 'We cannot say what the new world is going to be at the end of the war; the Indian problem cannot be isolated from world problems; ... Dominion Status under existing circumstances is the highest we can offer India.' You yourself have said, 'Of what value is freedom to India if Britain and France fail?' Can you throw some light on these points?

A. The legal status of India, whether it is Dominion Status or something else, can only come after the war. It is not a question at present to decide whether India should be satisfied with Dominion Status for the time being. The only question is what is the British policy? Does Great Britain still hold the view that it is her sole right to determine the status of India or whether it is the sole right of India to make that determination? If that question had not been raised, there would have been no discussion such as we are facing today. The question having been raised—and it was India's right to raise



it - I was bound to throw in my weight, such as it is, with the Congress. Nevertheless I can still repeat the question I put to myself immediately after the first interview with the Viceroy:<sup>1</sup> 'Of what value is freedom to India if Britain and France fail?' If these powers fail, the history of Europe and the history of the world will be written in a manner no one can foresee. Therefore my question has its own independent value. The relevant point, however, is that by doing justice to India, Britain might ensure victory of the Allies because their cause will then be acclaimed as righteous by the enlightened opinion of the world.

Q. Have you any views about world federation (Streit's<sup>2</sup> scheme of 15 white democracies with India excluded at present) or about a federation of Europe with the British Commonwealth and again excluding India? Would you advise India to enter such a larger federation so as to prevent a domination of the coloured races by the white?

A. Of course I would welcome a world federation of all the nations of the world. A federation of the Western nations only will be an unholy combination and a menace to humanity. In my opinion a federation excluding India is now an impossibility. India has already passed the stage when she could be safely neglected.

Q. You have seen in your lifetime more devastation by war than there has been at any time in the world's history. And yet do you still believe in non-violence as the basis of a new civilization? Are you satisfied that your own countrymen accept it without reservation? You continue to harp on your conditions being fulfilled before starting civil disobedience. Do you still hold to them?

A. You are right in pointing out that there is unheard-of devastation going on in the world. But that is the real moment for testing my faith in non-violence. Surprising as it may appear to my critics, my faith in non-violence remains absolutely undimmed. Of course non-violence may not come in my lifetime in the measure I would like to see it come, but that is a different matter. It cannot shake my faith, and that is why I have become unbending so far as the fulfilment of my conditions prior to the starting of civil disobedience is con-

cerned; because, at the risk of being the laughing-stock of the whole world, I adhere to my belief that there is an unbreakable connection between the spinning-wheel and non-violence so far as India is concerned. Just as there are signs by which you can recognize violence with the naked eye, so is the spinning-wheel to me a decisive sign of non-violence. But nothing can deter me from working away in hope. I have no other method for solving the many baffling problems that face India.

Q. You want a declaration that henceforth India shall govern herself according to her own will. You also say, 'It is possible for the best Englishmen and the best Indians to meet together and never to separate till they have evolved a formula acceptable to both.' The British say, 'We are vitally interested in defence, our commercial interests, and the Indian States.' Are you willing to allow your best Englishmen and your best Indians to enter into a treaty in regard to these matters 'in a spirit of friendly accommodation'?

A. If the best Englishmen and the best Indians meet together with a fixed determination not to separate until they have reached an agreement, the way will have been opened for the summoning of the Constituent Assembly of my conception. Of course this composite board will have to be of one mind as to the goal. If that is put in the melting-pot, there will be nothing but interminable wrangling. Therefore self-determination must be the common cause with this composite board.

Q. Supposing India does become free in your lifetime, what will you devote the rest of your years to?

A. If India becomes free in my lifetime and I have still energy left in me, of course I would take my due share, though outside the official world, in building up the nation on a strictly non-violent basis.

Interview to the *New York Times*  
*Harijan*, 27 Apr. 1940

<sup>1</sup> This was on 4 September 1939.

<sup>2</sup> C. K. Streit, an American journalist. The reference is to a scheme he had propounded in *Union Now*.

## 148. A BROAD 'GANDHIAN' FRAMEWORK

On the Train to Calcutta,  
November 30, 1945

Perhaps the expression 'Gandhian Constitution' is not a fitting title for Principal Agrawal's<sup>1</sup> pages. It may be acceptable as a convenient and compact title. The framework is really Principal Agrawal's, based on his study of my writings. He has been interpreting them for a number of years. And as he is anxious not to misinterpret them in any way, he would publish nothing without my seeing it. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is obvious. The disadvantage lie in the reader mistaking the particular writing being my view in every detail. Let me then warn him against making any such mistake. If I were to commit myself to every word appearing in these pages, I might as well write the thing myself. Though I have endeavoured to read the constitution twice, with as much attention as I was able to bestow on it during my other engagements, I could not undertake to check every thought and every word of it. Nor would my sense of propriety and individual freedom permit me to commit any such atrocity. All, therefore, I am able to say is that the brochure contains ample evidence of the care bestowed upon it by the author to make it as accurate as he could. There is nothing in it which has jarred on me as inconsistent with what I would like to stand for.

The author was good enough to make such alterations as I thought were necessary.

The word 'constitution' must not mislead the reader into thinking that the author has made any profession to give him a complete constitution. He has made it perfectly clear in the beginning pages that he has only laid down broad lines to indicate what a constitution of my conception would be. I regard Principal Agrawal's to be a thoughtful contribution to the many attempts at presenting India with constitutions. The merit of his attempt consists in the fact that he has done what for want of time I have failed to do.

M. K. GANDHI

Foreword

*Gandhian Constitution for Free India*

<sup>1</sup> Shriman Narayan Agrawal

## 149. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AS CONSTRUCTIVE SATYAGRAH

Bombay,<sup>1</sup>

July 7, 1946

I have often said that man plans but the success of his plans depend not on him but on the will of Providence which is the supreme arbiter of our destinies. Unlike you, I am here not in my own right but on sufferance. I have been told that some of my previous remarks about the Cabinet Mission's proposals have caused a good deal of confusion in the public mind. As a *satyagrahi* it is always my endeavour to speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I never wish to hide anything from you. I hate mental reservations. But language is at best an imperfect medium of expression. No man can fully express in words what he feels or thinks. Even seers and prophets of old have suffered under that disability.

I have not seen what has appeared in the papers about what I am supposed to have said regarding the Cabinet Mission's proposals. I cannot read all the newspapers myself. I content myself with perusing only what my co-workers and assistants may place before me. I hold that I have lost nothing thereby. Because of what has appeared in the Press, an impression seems to have been created that I said one thing at Delhi and am saying something different now. I did say in one of my speeches at Delhi in regard to the Cabinet Mission's proposals that I saw darkness where I saw light before. That darkness has not yet lifted. If possible it has deepened. I could have asked the Working Committee to turn down the proposals about the Constituent Assembly if I could see my way clearly. You know my relations with the members of the Working Committee. Babu Rajendra Prasad might have been a High Court Judge, but he chose instead to act as my interpreter and clerk in Champaran.<sup>2</sup>

Then there is the Sardar. He has earned the nickname of being my yes-man. He does not mind it. He even flaunts it as a compliment. He is a stormy petrel. Once he used to dress and dine in the Western style. But ever since he decided to cast his lot with me my word has been law to him. But even he cannot see eye to eye with me in this matter. They both tell me that whereas on all previous occasions I was able to

support my instinct with reason and satisfy their head as well as heart, this time I have failed to do so. I told them in reply that whilst my own heart was filled with misgivings, I could not adduce any reason for it or else I would have asked them to reject the proposals straightaway. It was my duty to place my misgivings before them to put them on their guard. But they should examine what I had said in the cold light of reason and accept my viewpoint only if they were convinced of its correctness. Their decision, which they have arrived at after prolonged deliberations and which is almost unanimous, is before you. The members of the Working Committee are your faithful and tried servants. You should not lightly reject their resolution.

I am willing to admit that the proposed Constituent Assembly is not the Parliament of the people. It has many defects. But you are all seasoned and veteran fighters. A soldier is never afraid of danger. He revels in it. If there are shortcomings in the proposed Constituent Assembly, it is for you to get them removed. It should be a challenge to combat, not a ground for rejection. I am surprised that Shri Jayaprakash Narayan said yesterday that it would be dangerous to participate in the proposed Constituent Assembly and therefore they should reject the Working Committee's resolution. I was not prepared to hear such defeatist language from the lips of a tried fighter like Jayaprakash. One line from a song composed by the late Choudhary Rambhaji Dutt has always made a very deep appeal to me. It means: 'We will never be defeated – nay, not even in death.' That is the spirit in which I expect you to approach this resolution. A *satyagrahi* knows no defeat.

Nor would I expect a *satyagrahi* to say that whatever Englishmen do must be bad. The English are not necessarily bad. There are good men and bad men among the English people as among any other people. We ourselves are not free from defects. The English could not have risen to their present strength if they had not some good in them. They have come and exploited India, because we quarrelled amongst ourselves and allowed ourselves to be exploited. In God's world un-mixed evil never prospers. God rules even where Satan seems to hold sway, because the latter exists only on His sufferance.

Some people say that *satyagraha* is of no avail against a person who has no moral sense. I join issue with that. The stoniest heart must melt if we are true and have enough patience. A *satyagrahi* lays down his life, but never gives up. That is the meaning of the 'Do or die' slogan. That slogan does not mean 'Kill or be killed'. That would be wilful distortion and travesty of its true meaning. The true meaning is that we must do our duty and die in the course of performing it if necessary.

To die without killing is the badge of a *satyagrahi*. If we had lived up to that ideal we would have won *swaraj* by now. But our *ahimsa* was lame. It walked on crutches. Even so it has brought us to our present strength. I know what happened in 1942. You will perhaps say that it was sabotage and underground activity that had brought the country to its present strength. It cannot be denied that sabotage activity was carried on in the name of the Congress during the '42 struggle but I deny *in toto* that the strength of the masses is due to that. Whatever strength the masses have is due entirely to *ahimsa* however imperfect or defective its practice might have been. Our *ahimsa* was imperfect because we were imperfect, because it was presented to you by an imperfect being like myself. If, then, even in the hands of imperfect instruments it could produce such brilliant results, what could it not have achieved in the hands of a perfect *satyagrahi*?

In 1942 our people showed great valour. But greater valour will be required of us before our goal is reached. We have done much, but more remains to be done. For that we must have patience and humility and detachment. You should try to understand what happened in 1942, the inner meaning of that struggle and the reason why it stopped short where it did.

This is no time for dalliance or ease. I told Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that he must wear the crown of thorns for the sake of the nation and he has agreed.<sup>3</sup> The Constituent Assembly is going to be no bed of roses for you, but only a bed of thorns. You may not shirk it.

That does not mean that everybody should want to go into it. Only those should go there who are especially fitted for the task by virtue of their legal training or special talent. It is not a prize to be sought as a reward for sacrifices, but a duty to

be faced even like mounting the gallows or sacrifice of one's all at the altar of service.

There is another reason why you should join the Constituent Assembly. If you asked me whether in the event of your rejecting the proposed Constituent Assembly or the Constituent Assembly failing to materialize, I would advise the people to launch civil disobedience, individual or mass, or undertake a fast myself, my reply is 'No'. I believe in walking alone. I came alone in this world, I have walked alone in the valley of the shadow of death and I shall quit alone when the time comes. I know I am quite capable of launching *satyagraha* even if I am all alone. I have done so before. But this is no occasion for a fast or civil disobedience. I regard the Constituent Assembly as the substitute of *satyagraha*. It is constructive *satyagraha*.

The alternative is constructive work which you have never done justice to. If you had, you would have today got the Constituent Assembly of Jayaprakash's dream instead of the present one. But a *satyagrahi* cannot wait or delay action till perfect conditions are forthcoming. He will act with whatever material is at hand, purge it of dross and convert it into pure gold. Whatever may be the defects in the State Document of May 16, I have no doubt as to the honesty of those who have framed it. They know they have got to quit. They want to quit in an orderly manner. And to that end they have produced the Document they could under the circumstances. I refuse to believe that they came all the way from England to deceive us.

A Polish lady<sup>4</sup> has sent me a note just today saying that all Europeans had received secret instructions to leave India as the British army would no longer be able to give them adequate protection. If it is so, it is a sad reflection on us. We would be unworthy of the name of *satyagrahi* if even an English child did not feel secure in our midst. Even if we succeed in driving out the Europeans by these tactics, something worse will take their place. Our Quit India Resolution has no malice about it. It only means that we will no longer be exploited.

Let us not be cowardly, but approach our task with confidence and courage. Let not the fear of being deceived dismay

us. No one can deceive a *satyagrahi*. Never mind the darkness that fills my mind. He will turn it into light.

Continuing, Mahatma Gandhi referred to the draft resolution on the *satyagraha* movement now being carried on by Indians in South Africa. He said that the Indians in South Africa were being ill-treated not because they were not whites but because they were considered as coolies. The Indians in South Africa spoke English and many of them were doctors and lawyers. In spite of all this, the South African whites looked upon them as coolies and called them as such. The Indians, of course, were in a minority and yet they were putting up a brave fight. They had no swords or guns but they were determined to resist the anti-Indian laws by soul force, which was the only force available to *satyagrahis*. Durban owed its present prosperity to the Indians. The South African whites had agreed to give the Indians the vote though not as equals but as inferiors.

The white civilization in South Africa could not be kept alive by such means. Mahatma Gandhi wondered how a brave man like General Smuts who had praised the Indians so much in the past could be instrumental in taking steps to deprive the Indians of their elementary rights.

Commenting on the doings of the white hooligans who were said to have beaten to death an Indian, whom they mistook for a *satyagrahi*, Gandhi remarked

It is a sad event. Nevertheless, I feel happy. A *satyagrahi* must always be ready to die with a smile on his face without retaliation and without rancour in his heart. Some people have come to have a wrong notion that *satyagraha* means only jail-going, perhaps facing *lathi* blows and nothing more. Such *satyagraha* cannot bring independence. To win independence you have to learn the art of dying without killing.

I venture to submit that a civilization which needs such barbarous legislation for its protection is a contradiction in terms. The Indians are fighting for their honour. The land in South Africa does not belong to the whites. Land belongs to one who labours on it. I would not shed a single tear if all the *satyagrahis* in South Africa are wiped out. Thereby they will not only bring deliverance to themselves but point the way to the Negroes and vindicate the honour of India. I am proud of them and so should you be.



His object in speaking to them, he continued, was not to move them to tears or to incite them to anger and vituperation against the whites. Rather they should pray to God to guide the whites aright and grant strength and courage to their brethren to remain steadfast to the end.

The South African struggle may appear to be insignificant today but it is charged with momentous consequences. *Satyagraha* is today being tried in the land of its birth. The success of a handful of Indians, mostly descendants of indentured labourers, has excited the jealousy of the whites of South Africa. And they are now subjecting them to unspeakable indignities. They are sought to be segregated into ghettos and further humiliated by being offered an inferior franchise. That all this should happen under the imprimatur of Field Marshal Smuts fills me with shame and humiliation. Our sins have a strange way of coming home to roost. We turned a portion of ourselves into pariahs and today the whites of South Africa are doing the same to our compatriots there. Let us purge ourselves of this curse and bless the heroic struggle of our brethren in South Africa. They do not need our monetary help. But they need all our sympathy and moral support.<sup>5</sup>

Speech at AICC, 26 June 1946

*The Hindu*, 8 July 1946

*Harijan*, 14 & 21 July 1946

<sup>1</sup> On 26 June the Congress Working Committee had passed a resolution in New Delhi expressing willingness to 'join the proposed Constituent Assembly with a view to framing the constitution of a free, united and democratic India, and demanding the formation of a representative and responsible Provisional National Government' at the earliest possible date.

Gandhi spoke on the motion moved by Abul Kalam Azad seeking ratification of the resolution of 26 June and the one on *satyagraha* in South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> In 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President of the Indian National Congress.

<sup>4</sup> Wanda Dynowska.

<sup>5</sup> After Gandhi's address the debate was resumed. Prominent among those who opposed the resolution were Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali, members of the Congress Socialist Party. The resolution was then put to vote and carried: 204 voting for and 51 against.

The resolution on the *satyagraha* in South Africa was also passed.

150. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND PARLIAMENTARY  
ACTIVITY

Panchgani,  
July 18, 1946

My post contains so many letters from persons who want to be in the Constituent Assembly that it frightens me into the suspicion that, if these letters are an indication of the general feeling, the intelligentsia is more anxious about personal aggrandizement than about India's independence. And if I, though I have no connection with the applications of candidates for elections, receive so many letters, how many more must the members of the Working Committee be receiving? These correspondents should know that I take no interest in these elections, I do not attend meetings at which these applications are considered and that I often only know from newspapers who has been elected. It is on rare occasions that my advice is sought as to the choice to be made. But I write this more to draw attention to the disease of which these applications are a sign than to warn my correspondents against building any expectation of my intervention. It is wrong to think communally in such elections, it is wrong to think that anyone is good enough for the Constituent Assembly, it is altogether wrong to think that the election carries any honour with it, it is a post of service if one is fitted for the labours and, lastly, it is wrong to regard the post as one for making a few rupees while the Assembly lasts.

The Constituent Assembly should have such members only who know something about constitutions all the world over, above all, about the constitution that India's genius demands. It is debasing to think that true service consists in getting a seat in the Assembly. True service lies outside. The field of service outside is limitless. In the fight for independence, the Assembly, like the one in course of formation, has a place. Nevertheless it is a very small place and that too if we use it wisely and well; certainly not, if there is a scramble for a seat in it. The scramble warrants the fear that it may become a hunting ground for place-seekers. I am free to confess that a Constituent Assembly is the logical outcome of parliamentary activity. The labour of the late Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das

and Pandit Motilal Nehru opened my eyes to the fact that the parliamentary programme had a place in the national activity for independence. I strove hard against it. It is certainly inconsistent with pure non-co-operation. But pure non-co-operation never held the field. What came into being also waned. Had there been universal non-co-operation of the non-violent type in the Congress ranks, there would have been no parliamentary programme.

Non-violent non-co-operation with evil means co-operation with all that is good. Therefore, non-violent non-co-operation with a foreign government necessarily means an indigenous government based on non-violence. Had there been such complete non-co-operation, there would be *swaraj* today based on non-violence. But this never happened. In the circumstances it would have been vain to struggle against what the nation had been familiar with and from which it could not be completely weaned. The parliamentary step having been taken, it would have been improper to boycott the present effort. But that does not, can never, mean that there should be indecent competition for filling the seats in it. Let us recognize the limitations.

‘A Tragic Phenomenon’

*Harijan*, 28 July 1946

#### 151. AUTONOMY AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

Poona,  
July 28, 1946

Gandhi said that it was a great pleasure to him to be able to meet the Deccan Princes. He had read the papers and the note prepared for his papers. It was a good thing that the Princes were seriously thinking in terms of the whole of India, rather than of themselves and of the protection they had all these years thought they were getting from the Paramountcy of the British Power. Only a few years ago the Princes felt that they could not be safe except under the Paramountcy of the British Crown. It seemed to have dawned on most of them that that was not the correct attitude. This was but natural, for they were after all sons of the soil. He had said openly

on another occasion that the people of the States were slaves of slaves which the Princes were. They exercised their authority within their own principalities, so long as they were in the good books of the British Government. They were made or unmade at the pleasure of the British Crown. The Princes who had eyes opened to that vital fact were desirous of India's independence equally with the people of India. If then they felt that need, they did not want a union of the States but each State had first to form a union with its own people. Their people were the real power on whom they were to depend for their status. It became trusteeship if they became servants of their own people. If they took that attitude, they needed no terms with the Congress or with any other organization. The immediate need was an understanding with their own people.

He made bold to take up that attitude, though his might be a lonely voice. In his opinion, the Princes, as servants and trustees of their people, were worthy of their hire. It would then (but not before) be time to consider whether they and their people wanted a union among themselves. Such a union would be of a wholly different type from what they had conceived.

The speaker had a serious suspicion that the present proposal was a creation of the British Rulers, meaning the Political Agents. No blame need be imputed to them if they advised such a union. They were brought up in no better tradition. They thought that when the British power was not in India, the Princes would fight amongst themselves. That fear was wholly unjustifiable. They honestly believed that before they retired, as they must within perhaps a few months, owing to force of circumstances, they should enable the Princes to consolidate their power by organizing them into a union.

It was his belief that if India was not merely to be independent of British control, but was to enjoy real freedom, which their country, by virtue of its ancient culture and tradition, was entitled to, it should grow from the bottom upwards, not be imposed from above. Otherwise, it would be a question of change of masters only. Instead of the English, there might be the Allied Powers or whosoever could impose himself on them. He did not look forward to that time. He looked forward to a time when India would come into her own because of her intrinsic merit. To that consummation the Princes could make a most handsome contribution.

If the Deccan Princes played their part and set a solid example, they would follow. For that purpose, the speaker repeated, they did not need the suggested union. If, on the other hand, at the back of their minds they had the idea that they would give the so-called responsible Government to the people to the ear and break it to the

heart, then the proposed union would be a kind of military combination, after the manner of the European Powers. It would be used against the people despite their protestations. That Power would be useless against a first-class military Power. They would be the first to lay down their arms before a venturesome aggressor. The British had taken good care not to give them training that might enable them to resist a Power like themselves by force of arms.

What applied to the States applied to the whole of India. She would have to serve a long period of tutelage at the feet of the Western nations before she could become a first-class military power. A quarter of a century's effort that the Congress had spent in teaching the country non-violence would in that event have been utterly wasted. That was not a prospect to which he could look forward with equanimity.

He had suggested to the Raja Sahib of Aundh that the Princes should, with necessary changes, copy the constitution of Aundh, if they wanted to take their due share in building up of a free India. That constitution was designed for the people. He, the speaker, would have liked it to go much further in such matters as the amount and control of the privy purse, etc. But all that had to come naturally. It could not be imposed. The working of that constitution, he added, had made considerable progress, though not all the progress which the Raja Sahib of Aundh, his Prime Minister or he, would have liked.

After Gandhi had finished, a discussion followed and questions were asked. 'Unless we unite, not a single State would have a survival value', remarked one of them and asked for Gandhi's opinion on that point.

GANDHI. I am prepared to join issue on it though mine is perhaps a solitary voice. Every village has a survival value. Why should not your villages and hence you, the Princes, if you will be part of the people? Aundh, one of the smallest among you, has a greater survival value than many of you. It depends upon you. So far as the people are concerned, they are one with the rest of India already.

In an article that I have written for the *Haryana* you will see my picture of Independence. In that picture, the unit is the village community. The superstructure of Independence is not to be built on the village unit so that the top weighs down on and crushes the forty crores of people who constitute the base. The power will vest in the unit itself, which will be economi-

cally and politically as autonomous as possible. Today power is perched on Mt. Everest. From there orders are issued and the people have to obey. The almighty British Government comes to the people once or twice in the year when the *patel* and the *talati* come to collect revenue.

I have conceived round the village as the centre a series of ever-widening circles, not one on top of the other, but all on the same plane, so that there is none higher or lower than the other. Maine has said that India was a congeries of village republics. The towns were then subservient to the villages. They were emporia for the surplus village products and beautiful manufactures. That is the skeleton of my picture to serve as a pattern for Independent India. There are many faults in the ancient village system. Unless they are eradicated, there will not only be no hope for the untouchables in a free India but for India in the comity of nations.

But we shall ask our people to draw up their own constitution. The plan of union that we have drawn up is only intended as a blue-print for their consideration," explained another.

A: With the best intention in the world you will not be able to do that. You are brought up in a different tradition. Therefore, I suggest you should see Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru about it, if you will really let the people judge. He is the proper person to deal with this question as the President of the States' People's Conference. You should not be afraid to go to the States' People's Conference with your suggestions. Let the Conference decide finally. Their present policy is sound and not hostile to you, considered as servants and trustees of your people.

Q: We are anxious to serve our mother country. But we are so small that we cannot serve unless we merge into a union.

A: Not in my picture of Independent India. A village unit as conceived by me is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of 1,000 souls. Such a unit can give a good account of itself, if it is well organized on a basis of self-sufficiency. Do not, therefore, think that unless you have a big

union you will not be able to give a good account of yourself. If Princes are all of one mind and the interest of the people is first and themselves last, theirs will be more solid union than the one now proposed.

Q. What would you say if the States organized themselves on the basis of village republics first and then formed them into a union.'

A. That would be excellent, but then you will speak a different language and proceed to work in an altogether different way

Q. But that may take a long time and, unless it is done by people outside first, our people will not take to it

A. I have said that the States can make the finest contribution to the building of India's future Independence, if they set the right example in their own territories. They as individual States being compact, homogenous units can well afford to make experiments in government. As it is, the Princes have taken the lead only in copying the bad points of the British system. They allow themselves to be led by the nose by their Ministers, whose administrative talent consists only in extorting money from their dumb, helpless subjects. By their tradition and training they are unfitted to do the job you have let them do. Therefore, my advice to you is: 'Make Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru your Chief Minister, if you are in earnest. Let him present you with an outline. He will naturally consult the people.'

Q. We want to organize ourselves into a union so that our people may have *swaraj* first without waiting for the labours of the Constituent Assembly to be finished, which may take time.

A. That is the wrong way of going about the thing. If you are solicitous of the welfare of the people and want them to come into their own, give them the fullest liberty straight away. By the time you have done that, the Constituent Assembly will have finished its work. The constitution which it will frame will not be for British India merely, but for the whole of India. That constitution will necessarily provide for a

States' union or unions, if it is desirable. You should assist them instead of anticipating them by forming your own union. Begin with the individual and you will not then go wrong.

N C KEIKAR: Are you opposed to the union because it is suspect in your eyes?

A: I began with that. But I do not oppose it on the ground of my suspicion. I suspect not you—A, B or C—but the circumstances. You do not know the danger and mischief you are running into. Hence my advice to you to hasten slowly.

Q: If you stretch your argument, would it not apply equally to the district and *taluk* organizations in the provinces? Why do not you ask for their dissolution?

A: I am not asking you to dissolve anything that already exists—not that I am enamoured of the machinery of administration set up in British India. History tells us, it was devised mainly to facilitate revenue collection. You will follow it only at your cost. My point just now is: Do not do anything in the shape of unions. Leave that work to be done by the Constituent Assembly. As a Sanskrit poet says, *anarambho hi karmani prathamam buddhilakshanam* (not to rush into new enterprises is the first mark of wisdom).

Speech at Meeting of Deccan Princes

*The Hindu*, 1 Aug. 1946

*Harijan*, 4 Aug. 1946



## IV

### *Swadeshi*—Self-Reliance

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#### § 1. The Principle of *Swadeshi*

##### 152 THE MEANING OF *SWADESHI*

We examined the balance-sheet of the last year. We were unhappy at the thought that we had to follow an alien calendar in making our calculations. No cause for unhappiness would remain if *swadeshi* were to replace everything foreign. We can easily attain happiness if we exert ourselves to that end during the year that has just commenced. *Swadeshi* carries a great and profound meaning. It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one's own country. That meaning is certainly there in *swadeshi*. But there is another meaning implied in it which is far greater and much more important. *Swadeshi* means reliance on our own strength. We should also know what we mean by 'reliance on our own strength'. 'Our strength' means the strength of our body, our mind and our soul. From among these on which should we depend? The answer is brief. The soul is supreme, and therefore soul-force is the foundation on which man must build. Passive resistance or *satyagraha* is a mode of fighting which depends on such force. That, then, is the only real key to success for the Indians.

During this year a good deal will depend on the Transvaal and Natal. The Transvaal fight is continuing. In Natal, the issue of licences will come up. If the Indians in the Transvaal give up their fight, that will have an immediate adverse effect in Natal, because the course of events in Natal during the coming year will largely be determined by this movement. Nothing will be gained by submitting petitions to the Natal Government. How, then, may anything be gained? The Transvaal provides the answer to this. That is to say, the

answer to the question as to what this year has in store for us will be provided by whether or not the Indians in the Transvaal fight to the last.

It may be hoped that a community from among which 2,000 men have been to gaol will never accept defeat, though there may be some traitors in it. Looking at the matter in this light, every Indian will find that what the new year will bring lies entirely in his own hands.

'New Year (G )

*Indian Opinion*, 2 Jan. 1909

### 153. SWADESHI AS A RULE OF LIFE

February 14, 1916

It was not without much diffidence that I undertook to speak to you at all. And I was hard put to it in the selection of my subject. I have chosen a very delicate and difficult subject. It is delicate because of the peculiar views I hold upon *swadeshi*, and it is difficult because I have not that command of language which is necessary for giving adequate expression to my thoughts. I know that I may rely upon your indulgence for the many shortcomings you will no doubt find in my address, the more so when I tell you that there is nothing in what I am about to say that I am not either already practising or am not preparing to practise to the best of my ability. It encourages me to observe that last month you devoted a week to prayer in the place of an address. I have earnestly prayed that what I am about to say may bear fruit and I know that you will bless my words with a similar prayer.

After much thinking, I have arrived at a definition of *swadeshi* that perhaps best illustrates my meaning. *Swadeshi* is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate religious surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous

institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such *swadeshi*, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millennium. And as we do not abandon our pursuit after the millennium because we do not expect quite to reach it within our time, so may we not abandon *swadeshi* even though it may not be fully attained for generations to come.

Let us briefly examine three branches of *swadeshi* as sketched above. Hinduism has become a conservative religion and therefore a mighty force because of the *swadeshi* spirit underlying it. It is the most tolerant because it is non-proselytising, and it is as capable of expansion today as it has been found to be in the past. It has succeeded not in driving, as I think it has been erroneously held, but in absorbing Buddhism. By reason of the *swadeshi* spirit, a Hindu refuses to change his religion not necessarily because he considers it to be the best, but because he knows that he can complement it by introducing reforms. And what I have said about Hinduism is, I suppose, true of the other great faiths of the world, only it is held that it is specially so in the case of Hinduism. But here comes the point I am labouring to reach. If there is any substance in what I have said, will not the great missionary bodies of India, to whom she owes a deep debt of gratitude for what they have done and are doing, do still better and serve the spirit of Christianity better, by dropping the goal of proselytising but continuing their philanthropic work? I hope you will not consider this to be an impertinence on my part. I make the suggestion in all sincerity and with due humility. Moreover, I have some claim upon your attention. I have endeavoured to study the Bible. I consider it as part of my scriptures. The spirit of the Sermon on the Mount competes almost on equal terms with the *Bhagavad Gita* for the domination of my heart.

I yield to no Christian in the strength of devotion with which I sing 'Lead, kindly Light' and several other inspired hymns of a similar nature. I have come under the influence of noted Christian missionaries belonging to different denomi-

nations. And I enjoy to this day the privilege of friendship with some of them. You will perhaps therefore allow that I have offered the above suggestion not as a biased Hindu but as a humble and impartial student of religion with great leanings towards Christianity. May it not be that the 'Go Ye unto All the World' message has been somewhat narrowly interpreted and the spirit of it missed? It will not be denied, I speak from experience, that many of the conversions are only so called. In some cases, the appeal has gone not to the heart but to the stomach. And in every case, a conversion leaves a sore behind it which, I venture to think, is avoidable. Quoting again from experience, a new birth, a change of heart, is perfectly possible in every one of the great faiths. I know I am now treading upon thin ice. But I do not apologise, in closing this part of my subject, for saying that the frightful outrage that is just going on in Europe, perhaps, shows that the message of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Peace, has been little understood in Europe, and that light upon it may have to be thrown from the East.

I have sought your help in religious matters, which it is yours to give in a special sense. But I make bold to seek it even in political matters. I do not believe that religion has nothing to do with politics. The latter divorced from religion is like a corpse only fit to be buried. As a matter of fact, in your own silent manner, you influence politics not a little. And I feel that if the attempt to separate politics from religion had not been made, as it is even now made, they would not have degenerated, as they often appear to do. No one considers that the political life of the country is in a happy state. Following out the *swadeshi* spirit, I observe the indigenous institutions and the village panchayats hold me. India is really a republican country, and it is because it is that that it has survived every shock hitherto delivered. Princes and potentates, whether they were Indian-born or foreigners, have hardly touched the vast masses except for collecting revenue. The latter in their turn seem to have rendered unto Caesar what was Caesar's and for the rest have done much as they have liked. The vast organization of caste answered not only the religious wants of the community, but it answered too its political needs. The villagers managed their internal affairs

through the caste system, and through it they dealt with any oppression from the ruling power or powers. It is not possible to deny of a nation that was capable of producing the caste system its wonderful power of organization. One had but to attend the great Kumbha Mela at Hardwar last year to know how skilful that organization must have been, which without any seeming effort, was able effectively to cater for more than a million pilgrims. Yet is it the fashion to say that we lack organizing ability. This is true, I fear, to a certain extent, of those who have been nurtured in the new traditions.

We have laboured under a terrible handicap owing to an almost fatal departure from the *swadeshi* spirit. We the educated classes have received our education through a foreign tongue. We have therefore not reacted upon the masses. We want to represent the masses, but we fail. They recognize us not much more than they recognize the English officers. Their hearts are an open book to neither. Their aspirations are not ours. Hence there is a break. And you witness not in reality failure to organize, but want of correspondence between the representatives and the represented. If during the last fifty years we had been educated through the vernaculars, our elders and our servants and our neighbours would have partaken of our knowledge; the discoveries of a Bose or a Ray would have been household treasure as are the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. As it is, so far as the masses are concerned, those great discoveries might as well have been made by foreigners. Had instruction in all the branches of learning been given through the vernaculars, I make bold to say that they would have been enriched wonderfully. The question of village sanitation, etc., would have been solved long ago. The village panchayats would be now a living force in a special way, and India would almost be enjoying self-government suited to its requirements and would have been spared the humiliating spectacle of organized assassination on its sacred soil. It is not too late to mend. And you can help if you will, as no other body or bodies can.

And now for the last division of *swadeshi*. Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from *swadeshi* in the economic and industrial life. If not an article

of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey. But that was not to be. We were greedy and so was England. The connection between England and India was based clearly upon an error. But she (England) does not remain in India in error. It is her declared policy that India is to be held in trust for her people. If this be true, Lancashire must stand aside. And if the *swadeshi* doctrine is a sound doctrine, Lancashire can stand aside without hurt, though it may sustain a shock for the time being. I think of *swadeshi* not as a boycott movement undertaken by way of revenge. I conceive it as a religious principle to be followed by all. I am no economist, but I have read some treatises which show that England could easily become a self-sustained country growing all the produce she needs. This may be an utterly ridiculous proposition, and perhaps the best proof that it cannot be true is that England is one of the largest importers in the world. But India cannot live for Lancashire or any other country before she is able to live for herself. And she can live for herself only if she produces and is helped to produce everything for her requirements within her own borders. She need not be, she ought not to be, drawn into the vortex of mad and ruinous competition which breeds fratricide, jealousy and many other evils. But who is to stop her great millionaires from entering into the world competition? Certainly, not legislation. Force of public opinion, proper education, however, can do a great deal in the desired direction.

The handloom industry is in a dying condition. I took special care during my wanderings last year to see as many weavers as possible, and my heart ached to find how they had lost, how families had retired from this once-flourishing and honourable occupation. If we follow the *swadeshi* doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages where they are not locally producible. This may all sound nonsensical. Well, India is a country of nonsense. It is

nonsensical to parch one's throat with thirst when a kindly Mahomedan is ready to offer pure water to drink. And yet thousands of Hindus would rather die of thirst than drink water from a Mahomedan household. These nonsensical men can also, once they are convinced that their religion demands that they should wear garments manufactured in India only and eat food only grown in India, decline to wear any other clothing or eat any other food. Lord Curzon set the fashion for tea-drinking. And that pernicious drug now bids fair to overwhelm the nation. It has already undermined the digestive apparatus of hundreds of thousands of men and women and constitutes an additional tax upon their slender purses. Lord Hardinge can set the fashion for *swadeshi* and almost the whole of India will forswear foreign goods.

There is a verse in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which, freely rendered, means masses follow the classes. It is easy to undo the evil if the thinking portion of the community were to take the *swadeshi* vow even though it may for a time cause considerable inconvenience. I hate interference in any department of life. At best, it is the lesser evil. But I would tolerate, welcome, indeed plead for, stiff protective duty upon foreign goods. Natal, a British colony, protected its sugar by taxing the sugar that came from another British colony, Mauritius. England has sinned against India by forcing free trade upon her. It may have been food for her, but it has been poison for this country.

It has often been urged that India cannot adopt *swadeshi* in the economic life at any rate. Those who advance this objection do not look upon *swadeshi* as a rule of life. With them, it is a mere patriotic effort not to be made if it involved any self-denial. *Swadeshi*, as defined here, is a religious discipline to be undergone in utter disregard of the physical discomfort it may cause to individuals. Under its spell, the deprivation of a pin or a needle, because these are not manufactured in India, need cause no terror. A *swadeshi* will learn to do without hundreds of things which today he considers necessary. Moreover, those who dismiss *swadeshi* from their minds by arguing the impossible forget that *swadeshi*, after all, is a goal to be reached by steady effort. And we would be making for the goal even if we confined *swadeshi* to a given set of articles,

allowing ourselves as a temporary measure to use such things as might not be procurable in the country.

There now remains for me to consider one more objection that has been raised against *swadeshi*. The objectors consider it to be a most selfish doctrine without any warrant in the civilized code of morality. With them, to practise *swadeshi* is to revert to barbarism. I cannot enter into a detailed analysis of the proposition. But I would urge that *swadeshi* is the only doctrine consistent with the law of humility and love. It is arrogance to think of launching out to serve the whole of India when I am hardly able to serve even my own family. It were better to concentrate my effort upon the family and consider that through them I was serving the whole nation and, if you will, the whole of humanity. This is humility and it is love. The motive will determine the quality of the act. I may serve my family regardless of the sufferings I may cause to others, as, for instance, I may accept an employment which enables me to extort money from people. I enrich myself thereby and then satisfy many unlawful demands of the family. Here I am neither serving the family nor the State. Or I may recognize that God has given me hands and feet only to work, with for my sustenance and for that of those who may be dependent upon me. I would then at once simplify my life and that of those whom I can directly reach. In this instance, I would have served the family without causing injury to anyone else.

Supposing that everyone followed this mode of life, we would have at once an ideal State. All will not reach that state at the same time. But those of us who, realizing its truth, enforce it in practice will clearly anticipate and accelerate the coming of that happy day. Under this plan of life, in seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature. *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas*<sup>1</sup> is not merely a legal maxim, but it is a grand doctrine of life. It is the key to a proper practice of *ahimsa* or love. It is for you, the custodians of a great faith, to set the fashion and show by



your preaching, sanctified by practice, that patriotism based on hatred 'killeth' and that patriotism based on love 'giveth life'.

Speech on *Swadeshi* at Missionary Conference, Madras

*The Hindu*, 28 Feb. 1916

*Young India*, 21 June 1919

<sup>1</sup> This Latin legal maxim means 'Use your property in such a way as not to damage that of others.'

#### 154. SWADESHI AS AN ACTIVE FORCE

March 20, 1916

I propose to reproduce only as much of it as in my opinion is worth placing on record with additions where they may be found necessary. The speech, it may be observed, was delivered in Hindi. After thanking Mahatmaji Munshi Ram for his great kindness to my boys to whom he gave shelter on two occasions and acted as father to them and after stating that the time for action had arrived rather than for speeches, I proceeded:

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Arya Samaj. I have often derived inspiration from its activity. I have noticed among the members of the Samaj much self-sacrifice. During my travels in India, I came across many Arya Samajists who were doing excellent work for the country. I am therefore grateful to Mahatmaji that I am enabled to be in your midst. At the same time, it is but fair to state that I am frankly a Sanatanist. For me Hinduism is all-sufficing. Every variety of belief finds protection under its ample fold. And though the Arya Samajists and the Sikhs and the Brahmo Samajists may choose to be classed differently from the Hindus, I have no doubt that at no distant future they will be all merged in Hinduism and find in it their fulness. Hinduism, like every other human institution, has its drawbacks and its defects. Here is ample scope for any worker to strive for reform, but there is little cause for secession.

Throughout my travels, I have been asked about the immediate need for India. And, perhaps, I would not do better

than repeat this afternoon the answer I have given elsewhere. In general terms, a proper religious spirit is the greatest and most immediate need. But I know that this is too general an answer to satisfy anybody. And it is an answer true for all time. What, therefore, I desire to say is, that owing to the religious spirit being dormant in us, we are living in a state of perpetual fear. We fear the temporal as well as the spiritual authority. We dare not speak out our minds before our priests and our pandits. We stand in awe of the temporal power. I am sure that in so doing we do a disservice to them and us. Neither the spiritual teachers nor our political governors could possibly desire that we should hide the truth from them. Lord Willingdon, speaking to a Bombay audience, has been saying recently that he had observed that we hesitated to say 'No' when we really meant it and advised his audience to cultivate a fearless spirit. Of course, fearlessness should never mean want of due respect or regard for the feelings of others.

In my humble opinion, fearlessness is the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything permanent and real. This quality is unattainable without religious consciousness. Let us fear God and we shall cease to fear man. If we grasp the fact that there is a divinity within us which witnesses everything we think or do and which protects us and guides us along the true path, it is clear that we shall cease to have any other fear on the face of the earth, save the fear of God. Loyalty to the Governor of governors supersedes all other loyalty and gives an intelligent basis to the latter.

And when we have sufficiently cultivated this spirit of fearlessness, we shall see that there is no salvation for us without true *swadeshi*, not the *swadeshi* which can be conveniently put off. *Swadeshi* for me has a deeper meaning. I would like us to apply it in our religious, political and economic life. It is not, therefore, merely confined to wearing on occasion *swadeshi* cloth. That we have to do for all time, not out of a spirit of jealousy or revenge, but because it is a duty we owe to our dear country. We commit a breach of the *swadeshi* spirit certainly if we wear foreign-made cloth, but we do so also if we adopt the foreign cut. Surely, the style of our dress has some correspondence with our environment. In elegance and tastefulness, it is immeasurably superior to the trousers and the

jacket. An Indian, wearing a shirt flowing over his pyjamas with a waist-coat on it without a necktie and its flaps hanging loose behind, is not a very graceful spectacle. *Swadeshi* in religion teaches one to measure the glorious past and re-enact it in the present generation.

The pandemonium that is going on in Europe shows that modern civilization represents forces of evil and darkness, whereas the ancient, i.e., Indian, civilization represents in its essence the divine force. Modern civilization is chiefly materialistic, as ours is chiefly spiritual. Modern civilization occupies itself in the investigation of the laws of matter, and employs human ingenuity in inventing or discovering means of production and weapons of destruction; ours is chiefly occupied in exploring spiritual laws. Our *shastras* lay down unequivocally that a proper observance of truth, chastity, scrupulous regard for all life, abstention from coveting others' possessions and refusal to hoard anything but what is necessary for our daily wants is indispensable for a right life; that without it a knowledge of the divine element is an impossibility. Our civilization tells us with daring certainty that a proper and perfect cultivation of the quality of *ahimsa* which, in its active form means purest love and pity, brings the whole world to our feet. The author of this discovery gives a wealth of illustration which carries conviction with it.

Examine its result in the political life. There is no gift so valued by our *shastras* as the gift of life. Consider what our relations would be with our rulers if we gave absolute security of life to them. If they could but feel that, no matter what we might feel about their acts, we could hold their bodies as sacred as our own, there would immediately spring up an atmosphere of mutual trust, and there would be such frankness on either side as to pave the way for an honourable and just solution of many problems that worry us today. It should be remembered that in practising *ahimsa*, there need not be any reciprocation, though, as a matter of fact, in its final stages, it commands reciprocation. Many of us believe, and I am one of them, that through our civilization we have a message to deliver to the world. I render my loyalty to the British Government quite selfishly. I would like to use the British race for transmitting this mighty message of *ahimsa* to the whole

world. But that can only be done when we have conquered our so-called conquerors, and you, my Arya Samaj friends, are perhaps specially elected for this mission. You claim to examine our scriptures critically, you take nothing for granted and you claim not to fear to reduce your belief to practice. I do not think that there is any room for trifling with or limiting the doctrine of *ahimsa*. You dare, then, to reduce it to practice regardless of immediate consequences which would certainly test the strength of your convictions. You would not only produce salvation for India, but you would render the noblest service that a man can render to humanity—a service, moreover, which you would rightly assert the great *swami*<sup>1</sup> was born for.

This *swadeshi* is to be considered as a very active force to be ceaselessly employed with an ever-increasing vigilance, searching self-examination. It is not meant for the lazy, but it is essentially meant for them who would gladly lay down their lives for the sake of truth. It is possible to dilate upon several other phases of *swadeshi*, but I think I have said enough to enable you to understand what I mean. I only hope that you, who represent a school of reformers in India, will not reject what I have said without thorough examination. And, if my word has commended itself to you, your past record entitles me to expect you to enforce in your own lives the things of eternity about which I have ventured to speak to you this afternoon—and cover the whole of India with your activity.

In concluding my report of the above speech, I would like to state what I did not in speaking to that great audience and it is this. I have now twice visited the Gurukul. In spite of some vital difference with my brethren of the Arya Samaj, I have a sneaking regard for them, and it, and perhaps the best result of the activity of the Arya Samaj is to be seen in the establishment and the conduct of the Gurukul. Though it depends for its vitality entirely upon the inspiring presence of Mahatmaji Munshi Ram, it is truly a national and self-governing and self-governed institution. It is totally independent of Government aid or patronage. Its war chest is filled not out of monies received from the privileged few, but from the poor many who make it a point of honour from year to year to make a pilgrimage to Kangri and willingly give their

mite for maintaining this National College. Here at every anniversary a huge crowd gathers and the manner in which it is handled, housed and fed evinces no mean power of organization. But the most wonderful thing about it all is that the crowd consisting of about ten thousand men, women and children is managed without the assistance of a single policeman and without any fuss or semblance of force, the only force that subsists between the crowd and the managers of the institution is that of love and mutual esteem.

Fourteen years are nothing in the life of a big institution like this. What the collegiates who have been just turned out during the last two or three years will be able to show, remains to be seen. The public will not and cannot judge men or institutions except through the results that they show. It makes no allowance for failures, it is a most exacting judge. The final appeal of the Gurukul as of all popular institutions must be to this judge. Great responsibility therefore rests upon the shoulders of the students who have been discharged from the college and who have entered upon the thorny path of life. Let them beware. Meanwhile, those who are well-wishers of this great experiment may derive satisfaction from the fact that we have it as an indisputable rule of life, that as the tree is, so will the fruit be. The tree looks lovely enough. He who waters it is a noble soul. Why worry about what the fruit is likely to be?

As a lover of the Gurukul, I may be permitted to offer one or two suggestions to the Committee and the parents. The Gurukul boys need a thorough industrial training if they are to become self-reliant and self-supporting. It seems to me that in our country in which 85 per cent of the population is agricultural and perhaps 10 per cent occupied in supplying the wants of the peasantry, it must be part of the training of every youth that he has a fair practical knowledge of agriculture and hand-weaving. He will lose nothing if he knows a proper use of tools, can saw a piece of board straight and build a wall that will not come down through a faulty handling of the plumber's line. A boy who is thus equipped will never feel helpless in battling with the world and never be in want of employment.

A knowledge of the laws of hygiene and sanitation as well

as the art of rearing children should also form a necessary part of the training of the Gurukul lads. The sanitary arrangements at the fair left much to be desired. The plague of flies told its own tale. These irrepressible sanitary inspectors incessantly warned us that in point of sanitation all was not well with us. They plainly suggested that the remains of our food and excreta needed to be properly buried. It seemed to me to be such a pity that a golden opportunity was being missed of giving to the annual visitors practical lessons on sanitation. But the work must begin with the boys. Then the management would have at the annual gathering three hundred practical sanitary teachers. Last but not least, let the parents and the Committee not spoil their lads by making them ape European dress or modern luxuries. These will hinder them in their afterlife and are antagonistic to *brahmacharya*. They have enough to fight against in the evil inclinations common to us all. Let us not make their fight more difficult by adding to their temptations

Speech at Gurukul Anniversary  
SWMG (4th edn ), pp 329-35

1. Dayanand Sarasvati

155 THE SWADESHI PLEDGE

[8 April 1919]

Although the desire for *swadeshi* animating a large number of people at the present moment is worthy of all praise, it seems to me that they have not fully realized the difficulty in the way of its observance. Vows are always taken only in respect of matters otherwise difficult of accomplishment. When after a series of efforts we fail in doing certain things, by taking a vow to do them we draw a cordon round ourselves, from which we may never be free and thus we avoid failures. Anything less than such inflexible determination cannot be called a vow. It is not a pledge or vow when we say we shall so far as possible do certain acts. If by saying that we shall so far as we can only use *swadeshi* articles, we can be deemed to have

taken the *swadeshi* vow, then from the Viceroy down to the labouring man very few people would be found who could not be considered to have taken the pledge, but we want to go outside this circle and aim at a much higher goal. And there is as much difference between the act contemplated by us and the acts above described as there is between a right angle and all other angles. And if we decide to take the *swadeshi* vow in this spirit, it is clear that it is well nigh impossible to take an all-comprehensive vow.

After having given deep consideration to the matter for a number of years, it is sufficiently demonstrated to me that we can take the full *swadeshi* vow only in respect of our clothing, whether made of cotton, silk or wool. Even in observing this vow, we shall have to face many difficulties in the initial stages and that is only proper. By patronizing foreign cloth we have committed a deep sin. We have condoned an occupation which in point of importance is second only to agriculture, and we are face to face with a total disruption of a calling to which Kabir was born and which he adorned. One meaning of the *swadeshi* vow suggested by me is that in taking it we desire to do penance for our sins, that we desire to resuscitate the almost lost art of hand-weaving, and that we are determined to save our Hindustan crores of rupees which go out of it annually in exchange for the cloth we receive. Such high results cannot be attained without difficulties; there must be obstacles in the way. Things easily obtained are practically of no value, but however difficult of observance that pledge may be, some day or other there is no escape from it if we want our country to rise to its full height. And we shall then accomplish the vow when we shall deem it a religious duty to use only that cloth which is entirely produced in the country and refrain from using any other.

Friends tell me that at the present moment we have not enough *swadeshi* cloth to supply our wants and that the existing mills are too few for the purpose. This appears to me to be a hasty generalization. We can hardly expect such good fortune as to have thirty crores of covenanters for *swadeshi*. A hardened optimist dare not expect more than a few *lakhs* and I anticipate no difficulty in providing them with *swadeshi* cloth, but where there is a question of religion there is no room for

thoughts of difficulties. The general climate of India is such that we require very little clothing. It is an exaggeration to say that three-fourths of the middle class population use much unnecessary clothing. Moreover, when many men take the vow, there would be set up many spinning-wheels and hand-looms. India can produce innumerable weavers. They are merely awaiting encouragement. Mainly two things are needful, viz., self-denial and honesty. It is self-evident that the covenanter must possess these two qualities, but in order to enable people to observe such a great vow comparatively easily, our merchants also will need to be blessed with these qualities. An honest and self-denying merchant will spin his yarn only from Indian cotton and confine weaving only to such cotton. He will only use those dyes which are made in India. When a man desires to do a thing he cultivates the necessary ability to remove difficulties in his path.

It is not enough that we manage if necessary with as little clothing as possible, but for a full observance it is further necessary to destroy all foreign clothing in our possession. If we are satisfied that we erred in making use of foreign cloth, that we have done an immense injury to India, that we have all but destroyed the race of weavers, cloth stained with such sin is only fit to be destroyed. In this connection, it is necessary to understand the distinction between *swadeshi* and boycott. *Swadeshi* is a religious conception. It is the natural duty imposed upon every man. The well-being of people depends upon it and the *swadeshi* vow cannot be taken in a punitive or revengeful spirit. The *swadeshi* vow is not derived from any extraneous happening, whereas boycott is a purely worldly and political weapon. It is rooted in ill will and a desire for punishment, and I can see nothing but harm in the end for a nation that resorts to boycott. One who wishes to be a *satyagrahi* for ever cannot participate in any boycott movement and a perpetual *satyagraha* is impossible without *swadeshi*. This is the meaning I have understood to be given to boycott. It has been suggested that we should boycott British goods till the Rowlatt legislation is withdrawn and that the boycott should terminate with the removal of that legislation. In such a scheme of boycott, it is open to us to take Japanese or other foreign goods even though they may be rotten. If I must use



foreign goods, having political relations with England, I would only take English goods and consider such conduct to be proper.

In proclaiming a boycott of British goods, we expose ourselves to the charge of desiring to punish the English but we have no quarrel with them; our quarrel is with the governors. And, according to the law of *satyagraha*, we may not harbour any ill will even against the rulers, and as we may harbour no ill will, I cannot see the propriety of resorting to boycott.

For a complete observance of the restricted *swadeshi* vow suggested above, I would advise the following text: 'With God as my witness, I solemnly declare that from today I shall confine myself, for my personal requirements, to the use of cloth, manufactured in India from Indian cotton, silk and wool, and I shall altogether abstain from using foreign cloth, and I shall destroy all foreign cloth in my possession.'

I hope that many men and women will be ready to take this vow, and the public taking of the pledge will be desirable only if many men and women are ready for it. Even a few men and women may publicly take the pledge, but in order to make *swadeshi* a national movement, it is necessary that many should join it. Those who approve of the proposed movement should, in my opinion, lose no time in taking effective steps to begin it. It is necessary to interview merchants. At the same time, there need be no undue haste. The foundation of *swadeshi* should be well and truly laid. This is the right time for it as I have found that when a purifying movement like *satyagraha* is going on allied activities have an easy chance of success.

'The Swadeshi Vow I'

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 Apr 1919

*New India*, 19 Apr 1919

## 156. SWADESHI AND MASS AWAKENING

[8 April 1919]

The following is the text of the *swadeshi* vow:

With God as my witness, I solemnly declare that from today I shall confine myself, for my personal requirements, to the use of cloth manufactured in India from Indian cotton, silk or wool and I shall altogether abstain from using foreign cloth, and I shall destroy all foreign cloth in my possession.

For a proper observance of the pledge, it is really necessary to use only hand-woven cloth made out of hand-spun yarn. Imported yarn, even though spun out of Indian cotton and woven in India, is not *swadeshi* cloth. We shall reach perfection only when our cotton is spun in India on indigenous spinning-wheels and yarn so spun is woven on similarly made handlooms. But requirements of the foregoing pledge are met, if we all only use cloth woven by means of imported machinery from yarn spun from Indian cotton by means of similar machinery.

I may add that covenanters to the restricted *swadeshi* referred to here will not rest satisfied with *swadeshi* clothing only. They will extend the vow to all other things as far as possible.

I am told that there are in India English-owned mills which do not admit Indian share-holders. If this information be true, I would consider cloth manufactured in such mills to be foreign cloth. Moreover, such cloth bears the taint of ill will. However well made such cloth may be, it should be avoided. The majority do not give thought to such matters. All cannot be expected to consider whether their actions promote or retard the welfare of their country, but it behoves those, who are learned, those who are thoughtful, whose intellects are trained or who are desirous of serving their country, to test every action of theirs, whether public or private, in the manner aforesaid, and when ideals which appear to be of national importance and which have been tested by practical experience should be placed before the people as has been said in the Divine Song, 'the multitude will copy the actions of the

enlightened'. Even thoughtful men and women have not hitherto generally carried on the above-mentioned self-examination. The nation has therefore suffered by reason of this neglect. In my opinion, such self-examination is only possible where there is religious perception.

Thousands of men believe that by using cloth woven in Indian mills, they comply with the requirements of the *swadeshi* vow. The fact is that most fine cloth is made of foreign cotton spun outside. Therefore the only satisfaction to be derived from the use of such cloth is that it is woven in India. Even on handlooms for very fine cloth only foreign yarn is used. The use of such cloth does not amount to an observance of *swadeshi*. To say so is simple self-deception. *Satyagraha*, i.e., insistence on truth, is necessary even in *swadeshi*. When men will say, 'we shall confine ourselves to pure *swadeshi* cloth, even though we may have to remain satisfied with a mere loin cloth', and when women will resolutely say, 'we shall observe pure *swadeshi* even though we may have to restrict ourselves to clothing just enough to satisfy the sense of modesty', then shall we be successful in the observance of the great *swadeshi* vow. If a few thousand men and women were to take the *swadeshi* vow in this spirit, others will try to imitate them so far as possible. They will then begin to examine their wardrobes in the light of *swadeshi*. Those who are not attached to pleasures and personal adornment, I venture to say, can give a great impetus to *swadeshi*.

Generally speaking, there are very few villages in India without weavers. From time immemorial, we have had village farmers and village weavers, as we have village carpenters, shoemakers, blacksmiths, etc., but our farmers have become poverty-stricken and our weavers have patronage only from the poor classes. By supplying them with Indian cloth spun in India, we can obtain the cloth we may need. For the time being it may be coarse, but by constant endeavours, we can get our weavers to weave out of fine yarn and so doing we shall raise our weavers to a better status, and if we would go a step still further, we can easily cross the sea of difficulties lying in our path. We can easily teach our women and our children to spin and weave cotton, and what can be purer than cloth woven in our own home? I tell it from my experi-

ence that acting in this way we shall be saved from many a hardship, we shall be ridding ourselves of many an unnecessary need, and our life will be one song of joy and beauty. I always hear divine voices telling me in my ears that such life was a matter of fact once in India, but even if such an India be the idle dream of the poet, it does not matter. Is it not necessary to create such an India now, does not our *purushartha* lie therein?

I have been travelling throughout India. I cannot bear the heart-rending cry of the poor. The young and old tell me, 'We cannot get cheap cloth, we have not the means wherewith to purchase dear cloth. Everything is dear—provisions, cloth and all. What are we to do?' And they heave a sigh of despair. It is my duty to give these men a satisfactory reply. It is the duty of every servant of the country, but I am unable to give a satisfactory reply. It should be intolerable for all thinking Indians that our raw materials should be exported to Europe and that we have to pay heavy prices therefor. The first and the last remedy for this is *swadeshi*. We are not bound to sell our cotton to anybody and when Hindustan rings with the echoes of *swadeshi*, no producer of cotton will sell it for its being manufactured in foreign countries. When *swadeshi* pervades the country, everyone will be set a-thinking why cotton should not be refined and spun and woven in the place where it is produced, and when the *swadeshi* mantra resounds in every ear, millions of men will have in their hands the key to the economic salvation of India. Training for this does not require hundreds of years. When the religious sense is awakened, people's thoughts undergo a revolution in a single moment. Only selfless sacrifice is the *sine qua non*.

The spirit of sacrifice pervades the Indian atmosphere at the present moment. If we fail to preach *swadeshi* at this supreme moment, we shall have to wring our hands in despair. I beseech every Hindu, Mussulman, Sikh, Parsi, Christian and Jew, who believes that he belongs to this country, to take the *swadeshi* vow and to ask others also to do likewise. It is my humble belief that if we cannot do even this little for our country, we are born in it in vain. Those who think deep will see that such *swadeshi* contains pure economics. I hope that every man and woman will give serious thought to my

humble suggestion. Imitation of English economics will spell our ruin.

'The Swadeshi Vow II'

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 Apr. 1919

*New India*, 22 Apr. 1919

# 157 SWADESHI AND DHARMA

June 28, 1919

The idea of *swadeshi* is of great importance and the progress of the country in *dharma* is bound up with it. A country which has forsaken *swadeshi* can be said to have no patriotic sentiment and will never be able to follow its *dharma*. We do not find this said in our *shastras*; on the contrary, it is even deduced from them that patriotism may be an obstacle on the path of *dharma*. This is an utterly absurd and misleading idea. Everyone ought to be mindful of his duty and failure to do so is to reduce the path of *karma* to sheer confusion. In Jainism, the secret of this path is explained with much greater insight than in any other faith. The friends who have assembled here do not need to be told what it is. If a man is born in India, there must be some reason behind the fact; that being so, we need to consider what is our especial duty. That duty is *swadeshi* and is included in *dharma*. Jainism teaches compassion towards living creatures and the duty of non-violence; it even teaches the protection of violent animals against small creatures. This, however, is no justification for our neglecting the duty of compassion and non-violence towards human beings. If our neighbours are in pain or misfortune, it is our duty to share their suffering and help them. All over the world, the religious life has lost importance to such an extent that irreligion is spreading in the name of religion and men everywhere are deceiving themselves. We claim to be men of *dharma*, whereas all our actions are tainted with *adharma*. We cannot claim to have followed *dharma* by earning money through *adharma*, and giving it in charity for promoting pious causes. Most of the people

assembled here are traders by profession. We are told that trade cannot be carried on without some admixture of dishonesty. I shall be plain and tell you that, if that is so, you had better give up trade. One's *dharma* lies in refusing to forsake truth even if that means starving, and, unless we live in this manner, *dharma* will not be the central purpose of our lives.

There is a painful thing I am obliged to mention, and it is that our religious leaders, whose duty it is to enlighten people, have forgotten that duty. This is true, however much it may hurt us. Religious leaders have it in them to set an example to their followers by their conduct. Mere preaching will have no effect on those who assemble to listen to their discourses. Religious leaders, too, should follow the rule of *swadeshi*. They have plenty of time on hand. They should take to the spinning-wheel and spin and thus set an example to their followers. More than in the reputation of Rama as they tell the beads, in the music of the spinning-wheel will they hear the voice of the *utman* with a beauty all its own.

*Swadeshi* is our primary obligation because natural to us. We have forsaken this natural obligation. Because of its neglect of *swadeshi*, the nation has been ruined. Three crores in India, that is, a tenth of the total population of the country, get only one meal a day, just plain bread and no more. Crores of rupees are annually lost to foreign countries. If this wealth of crores could remain in the country we would be able to save our starving countrymen. Thus, our economic well-being is also bound up with *swadeshi*, and in its observance there lies compassion for living beings. Moreover *swadeshi* cloth is likely to be cheaper than English cloth. I submit to you that you should make your own cloth or get it made. The vow of *swadeshi* is not a difficult one to keep. Through it, we shall remove the hardships of our countrymen. If we work at the spinning-wheel for eight hours we can spin one pound of yarn. The cloth being produced in India today can meet the needs of only 25 per cent of the population, we should therefore produce enough to meet the needs of the remaining 75 per cent. If, thus, people take to turning the spinning-wheel, not only shall we succeed in keeping the

vow of *swadeshi* but shall also ensure production of cloth in plenty.

Speech on *Swadeshi*, Cutchchi Jain

Mandal, Bombay (G.)

Gujarati, 6 July 1910

### 158. RESTRICTED SWADESHI

[8 August 1919]

These days the theme of my addresses is *swadeshi*. I save time from other activities and give all of it to *swadeshi*. It is through *swadeshi* that we shall get *swaraj*. When I spoke on '*Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*' at Surat, it occurred to me that I should explain to the people how *swadeshi* would cover all that I had at heart. At the present time, I want to propagate this idea and it is my hope that, in a few days or maybe months, everyone in India, from the Viceroy down to the sweeper, will realize that *swadeshi* can bring *swaraj*.

To this end, it is imperative that the ideal of *swadeshi* should be kept pure; it is so great a thing that it should not be debased.

India is suffering at present from afflictions of three kinds:

1. DISEASE: At no time in the past were the people of India afflicted with so many diseases as at present. The number of people rotting with disease in this country is greater than that in all the rest of the world.

2. HUNGER: The simple fact borne out by experience during the past few years is that a large section of the Indian people do not have enough to eat. Sir William Wilson Hunter said categorically forty years ago that three crores in India got only one meal a day, and that too consisting of no more than plain bread and salt. More than this, they got no ghee, oil or chillies. This was our misfortune forty years ago. Every official has been obliged to admit in the blue books that India's poverty is increasing day by day, and the cultivator's lot, especially, is the worst, as they alone know who move in villages.

If you inquire of the people in Gujarat, you will know what great difficulty they experience in getting milk. They are hard put to it to get milk even for an infant six months old. Whenever I questioned the people in the villages around Ahmedabad, I was told that, let alone themselves, even their children could get no milk. You will see from this that our present plight is much worse than it was forty years ago.

3. INSUFFICIENT COVERING FOR THE BODY: At present India is also afflicted with a cloth famine. According to Sir Dinshaw Wacha's<sup>1</sup> estimate, four years ago people in India got 13 yards of cloth per head, whereas now they get only 9. That is, there has been a reduction of four yards per head and to that extent our poverty has increased.

When I was working in Champaran two years ago, I had personal experience of women protesting to me, without mincing words, that they did not have even a piece of cloth with which to cover their bare limbs; how, then, they asked, could they bathe and wash to keep themselves clean? My heart bled to see our pure-hearted sisters in such a pitiable condition.

A land afflicted with this triple disease loses the qualities of courage, fortitude and truthfulness. The people of such a country have no *dharma* in them and I would even employ the term 'unmanly' to describe them. Here in India, too, we have been using this term these days.

When, with this idea in mind, I questioned people, one reply I got was that *dharma* should be restored. No doubt we have lost our *dharma*, but, in the present circumstances, restoring it is quite a difficult job, for it is extraordinarily difficult for a man in utter misery to follow *dharma*. Only a rare soul can do so. I call such persons *yogis*. Not all people, however, can become *yogis*. And thus, for the purity of the *atman*, purity of the body is also essential. 'A pure *atman* can dwell only in a pure body.' In order to revive the qualities of courage, and so on, this triple affliction should be got rid of. A man who follows *dharma* in the midst of such suffering I would call a *yogi*.

For curing the disease, a bold effort, requiring knowledge, is called for. We shall have to sacrifice our time to save people afflicted with such diseases. We should first ascertain whether people go hungry because of their lethargy or because of want.



Of food, there is plenty in India; the hungry should have it. But they need money with which to buy it, and it is for want of money that India is poor.

*Swadeshi* is needed to fight this state of affairs. By *swadeshi* we mean protecting our cotton and silk. This is my restricted definition of *swadeshi* in the circumstances which obtain today. Last year, we paid to foreign countries 56 crores of rupees for cotton goods and four for silk goods. The revered Dadabhai Naoroji used to say that India was being drained of her funds. It is true that a good deal of this money is spent on the military department and in paying pensions; personally, however, I would say that in no other way is so much money drained as on account of the absence of *swadeshi*. Eighteen crores were paid last year for sugar. There is much drain in other ways which I do not care to mention at the moment. I want to get hold of the trunk and once that is done the drain in other ways will stop by itself. Our first duty then, in the present circumstances, is to follow *swadeshi* in its restricted meaning; to this end, the three vows which I have given should be kept. Get control of the trade in yarn and you will get the rest easily enough.

We are unable today to produce sufficient cloth to meet our needs. Our mills cannot supply as much. We should take steps so that India is enabled to produce things which she does not do at present; this is one problem. I am at present discussing this problem with mill-owners and, in the course of our conversation, Sir Fazalbhai Karimbhai told me that it would take fifty years still before the mills could supply cloth in the required quantity. Should we then wait for fifty years? We see from the report of the Industrial Commission that in the country one-third the quantity of cloth can be produced through hand-weaving and that, if this industry is developed, things will become easier for us. Mills require machinery and for this we are dependent on others. Foreign countries do not have all that machinery to spare. Some say that it takes a nill one year to obtain one machine and installing it presents much difficulty. Having regard to all these obstacles, hand-weaving seems very easy, for it does not require all this effort. A man of average ability can learn the work in six months' time and one with some intelligence can pick it up in three months.

The method of making yarn is altogether simple. I took no more than 15 days to learn it.

A hundred and fifty years ago, we ourselves produced our cloth. Every mother in India did the work for the love of God. Traces of this age-old desire of the Indian woman for spinning are still visible. When recently, I went to Vijapur and Kalol, I met nearly 20,000 men and women. In the talks we had, the women told me that this was a good experiment, and an easy one. If they were provided with a spinning-wheel, they said they too would work. At present, a hundred and fifty women in Vijapur spin half a maund of cotton daily and, if supplied with cotton, four hundred women are ready to work. The women at Kalol give the same reply. My dear friend Mr. Chettiar came to see me from Madras. When I saw that Mrs. Chettiar had also come, I told Mr. Chettiar that I would detain her for eight days, for it would be quite a good thing if she learned spinning before she left. She accepted my suggestion immediately and left after she had learnt the work. She accepted it not because of her regard for me personally but because she loved the work. This shows that spinning is a hereditary activity with us. Those who read Darwin understand the theory of heredity.

If we refuse to take up this work, we shall lose this inheritance. I appeal to you not to give up faith. If we but try, a favourable environment will be created and we shall get back the inheritance we have disowned. Principal Paranjapye<sup>2</sup> said that we would fail in the competition with the rest of the world. But there is no question of competition in this. This is a question, rather, of the economic freedom of peasants and of the poor. The farmer is the father of the world. Take the example of America or Japan. They help the cultivator there. Our Governor, too, is anxious to know how the cultivator may be helped. The problem can be solved in accordance with the principles of economics.

It is my advice to young people to take up this work. It is easy enough and requires no special effort, nor does it require much intelligence. All that is necessary is some experience. One enjoys greater freedom through this work. The man who spins earns three annas daily, but the man who weaves earns eight annas. Talking to the weavers of Madanwadi in Bom-

bay, I came to know that many of them earned as much as one rupee, even two rupees, daily. This industry is useful to us. It should be widely popularized. Even the educated class should learn a little of the craft. In the same way as every boy in England knows some naval work, we should all learn this work.

If, thus, India understands this *mantra* and starts working as a matter of religious duty, the country's economic condition will improve and hunger and disease will disappear from our midst. Since you understand the idea, it is my prayer that you will put it into practice.

Speech at Gujarati Bandhu Sabha, Poona (G )  
*Indian Opinion*, 10 Oct 1919

<sup>1</sup> Sir Dinshaw Edulji Wacha (1844-1936), prominent Indian Parsi politician, President, the Indian National Congress, 1901

<sup>2</sup> R. P. Paranjpye, Principal, Fergusson College, Poona

# 159. SWADESHI AND MACHINERY

[14 September 1919]

I have observed that this doubt is felt by many people, and accordingly I have given the reply too. Pure *swadeshi* is not at all opposed to machinery. The *swadeshi* movement is meant only against the use of foreign cloth. There is no objection to weaving mill-made cloth. But I do not myself wear mill-made cloth and in the explanations to the *swadeshi* vow I have certainly suggested that it should be the ideal of every Indian to wear hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. If, fortunately for India, crores of people happen to translate this ideal into practice, the mills may perhaps have to suffer some loss. But if the whole of India makes that pure resolve, I am sure that even our mill-owners would welcome that resolve, respect its purity and associate themselves with it. But it takes long to outgrow inveterate habits. There is thus room in the country for both the mill industry and the handloom weaving. So let mills increase as also spinning-wheels and handlooms. And I should think that these latter are no doubt machines. The

handloom is a miniature weaving mill. The spinning-wheel is a miniature spinning-mill. I would wish to see such beautiful little mills in every home. But the country is fully in need of the hand-spinning and hand-weaving industry.

Agriculturists in no country can live without some industry to supplement agriculture. And in India, which is entirely dependent on favourable monsoons, the spinning-wheel and the handloom are like Kamadhenu.<sup>1</sup> This movement is thus intended in the interests of 21 crore peasants of India. Even if we have sufficient mills in the country to produce cloth enough for the whole country, we are bound to provide our peasantry, daily being more and more impoverished, with some supplementary industry, and that which can be suitable to crores of people is hand-spinning and hand-weaving. Opposition to mills or machinery is not the point. What suits our country most is the point. I am not opposed to the movement of manufacturing machines in the country, nor to making improvements in machinery. I am only concerned with what these machines are meant for. I may ask, in the words of Ruskin, whether these machines will be such as would blow off a million men in a minute or they will be such as would turn waste lands into arable and fertile land. And if legislation were in my hands, I would penalize the manufacture of labour-saving machines and protect the industry which manufactures nice ploughs which can be handled by every man.

'Swadeshi v. Machinery?'

*Young India*, 17 Sept 1919

<sup>1</sup> Kamadhenu is the mythical cow which bestowed anything one wished for

#### 160. SWADESHI AND BOYCOTT

Mr. Baptista<sup>1</sup> has addressed himself to showing that boycott is not only the same as *swadeshi* in effect but is superior to it. His reasons for saying so are that, whilst it fully serves the purpose of *swadeshi* in that it stimulates the use of home-made articles, it produces an effect upon the British merchant and manufacturer by touching his pocket. Mr. Baptista adds that

my opposition to boycott being purely a spiritual conception is not understood by the British people, whereas they have always recognized boycott as a perfectly constitutional and legitimate weapon which they understand.

To say that boycott is the same as *swadeshi* even in effect is not to understand either. *Swadeshi* is an eternal principle whose neglect has brought untold grief to mankind. It means production and distribution of articles manufactured in one's own country. In its narrow and present form it means the saving of sixty crore rupees annually through the instrumentality of the peasant population. It therefore also means giving 72 p.c. of the population a much-needed supplementary industry. *Swadeshi* is a constructive programme. Boycott, on the other hand, is a temporary makeshift resorted to in order to compel the hands of the British people by deliberately making an attempt to inflict a monetary loss upon them. Boycott, therefore, operates as an undue influence brought in to secure one's purpose. It may indirectly result, but not unless it is persistent and prolonged, in greater manufacture at home, but it certainly means the introduction of another disturbing factor, for, boycott does not mean exclusion of all foreign goods. It means exclusion of British goods only. It, therefore, involves greater encouragement of other foreign agencies, as for instance, Japanese and American. I certainly do not contemplate with equanimity the ever-growing influence of Japan upon Indian trade and commerce.

Boycott to be effective has to be fairly universal whereas the observance of *swadeshi* by a single person is so much to the national good. One can make boycott successful only by an appeal to angry passions. It may therefore result in unintended consequences and may even lead to a permanent estrangement between parties. Mr. Baptista, however, denies that appeal to angry passions is a necessary consequence of boycott especially if someone like me were to manage the movement. I venture to challenge the position. A man suffering from an injustice is exposed to the temptations of having his worst passions roused on the slightest pretext. By asking him to boycott British goods you inculcate the idea of punishing the wrongdoer. And punishment necessarily evokes anger.

Mr. Zahoor Ahmed who has also written to combat my

position says that withdrawal of co-operation is the same in essence as boycott, only it is far less effective because it is almost impossible of execution. Now, if I am serving co-operating with- a wrongdoer, I am participating in the wrong. Therefore withdrawal of co-operation becomes a duty when a wrong is serious. And even if one man ceases to co-operate it is effective to that extent because of the performance of his duty by even one man. But since boycott is a punishment and as no punishment can be a duty, boycott unless it produces its effect is wasted energy. And boycott by half a dozen persons is like hitting an elephant with a straw.

I admit, however, that my fundamental opposition to boycott is based on a spiritual conception. But that is to say that I am endeavouring to extend the spiritual law to the political world. I deny however that the British people will not understand it. I had no difficulty in making the Europeans of South Africa understand and appreciate it. Nor, in order to render it effective, is it necessary to follow the spiritual conception of a spiritual act. My contention is that an act purely spiritual is the simplest to understand and the easiest to execute. Spirituality is nothing if it is not eminently practical. It is not difficult to understand that we must wash our hands when they are dirty. It is equally simple to do so, yet it is essentially a spiritual practice. *Mens sana in corpore sano* is a doctrine of the soul. And even if we accept the necessity of cleaning dirty hands without a spiritual conception of cleanliness, so may we accept the practical failure of boycott and the practical necessity under definite conditions of non-co-operation without waiting to understand their spiritual basis.

Is boycott, then, practical? Mr. Baptista has approved of boycott of the British goods. I hold that if the highest and permanent good of the country cannot be sufficient incentive to our merchants for supporting *swadeshi* to the exclusion of foreign goods, an appeal to the merchants that, in order to bring justice from the British people, they shall temporarily stop their custom will, I venture to submit, fall flat. Boycott after the event is of no consequence. Boycott to influence the result must be instantaneous. In my opinion we are not organized enough for instant action. The area of boycott is too large for any organization that can be brought into being at a

moment's notice. And I can see no difficulty about British manufacturers introducing their wares into India through Japan or America even as Germany years ago introduced into India her goods through England.

I swear by *swadeshi* because it is an evolutionary process gaining strength as it goes forward. Any organization can serve it. It is independent of the justice or the injustice of the rulers or the British people. It is its own reward. 'There is no waste of energy, no failure, even a little practice of this *dharma* saves one from a great danger.' *Swadeshi* and boycott are, therefore, not the same but are at the opposite poles.

'Is Boycott *Swadeshi*'

*Young India* 14 Jan 1920

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Baptista, nationalist leader associated with the Home Rule Movement

## 161 THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT

A brief report of Shrimati Saraladevi's work in the Punjab appeared in *Navajwan* last week. From a telegram received later, it appears that even at the Khilafat Conference which she attended at Jhelum, she spoke on *swadeshi*. As Muslims are fast taking to *swadeshi*, it is easy to propagate *swadeshi* from a Khilafat platform.

At this juncture, it is very necessary to understand thoroughly some fundamental principles of *swadeshi*. Will it advance the cause of *swadeshi* if Muslims take the *swadeshi* vow in their hundreds of thousands? I think it will, provided that either there is an increase in the production of *swadeshi* goods to meet their needs or they and others reduce their requirements of cloth.

The cloth which our cotton mills produce is not enough for India's needs and the mills are not in a position to increase the production of cloth in the immediate future. Their weaving capacity is greater than their spinning capacity. If, therefore, we use mill-yarn for handloom cloth, it will mean that the mills will produce less correspondingly and not that there will be an increase in the total production of cloth. The result

will be large imports, not of cloth, but of yarn. That will leave us just where we are. We need not believe that we shall be saving on weaving, for yarn will cost more. This is not *swadeshi*.

The *swadeshi* of our conception safeguards both *dharma* and *artha*.<sup>1</sup> Not to be able to serve our own neighbours, our own kith and kin—to wrest a morsel from their mouths and put it into those of strangers, surely this would not be serving the higher end of life, this would not be compassion. That would only mean our deserting our own field of duty. We are, therefore, morally bound to encourage our sisters who spin and our weavers. In the process, we shall be sending 60 crores of rupees to the homes of our starving millions and this will safeguard *artha*. The *swadeshi dharma* is thus the royal road for safeguarding both our *dharma* and *artha*.

We can follow this only if we take to hand-spinning and hand-weaving. The true and genuine *swadeshi* movement, therefore, consists in increasing the production of yarn, getting the yarn woven and then marketing the cloth thus produced. It is, therefore, my suggestion to all lovers of *swadeshi* and to all owners of *swadeshi* stores that they should get women to spin and should popularize the cloth woven out of the yarn they produce. I know that this work is difficult and heart-breaking. But no progress is ever possible without our venturing on a path beset with difficulties. The way to the Dhaulagiri peak is strewn with the bones of countless travellers. The weak of heart lose their enthusiasm right at the foot, there is no way, though, except through hills and valleys. If, therefore, those who take up the *swadeshi* cause do so after fully understanding the basic principle of *swadeshi*, they will save themselves from disappointment. It does not matter if every worker does no more than spin and infects a few with his zeal, but there will be great harm, if the *swadeshi* movement does not make headway, in being satisfied with what goes under the name of *swadeshi*. No piece of brass, however shining, can serve for gold, nor a bit of glass for a diamond. Just as mistakenly accepting glass as diamond will only delay our getting the latter, in the same way we shall only retard the progress of *swadeshi* if we accept spurious *swadeshi* as genuine *swadeshi*.

Some people may wonder why, if the idea is to produce yarn, some 10 or 20 new mills should not be set up instead of



trying to persuade millions of women to spin. I have already answered this question in *Navajivan*. New mills are not easily set up. Nor does anyone need especially to make the effort. The rich make the attempt on their own and keep adding to the number. But the setting up of new mills will mean being permanently dependent on foreigners for machinery. It is, besides, no remedy for the hunger of the millions, nor does it enable us to put 60 crores of rupees in circulation among them every year. India's population numbering millions and spread over a length of 1900 miles will never be saved from starvation till we introduce a subsidiary occupation into the homes of the millions living on agriculture. Such an occupation can only be hand-spinning and, to some extent, hand-weaving. This industry flourished in India a hundred and fifty years ago and at that time we were not as miserably poor as we are today.

'Pure Swadeshi' (G.)  
*Navajivan*, 11 July 1920

<sup>1</sup> Material welfare

## 162. SWADESHI AND SWARAJ

The Congress resolution has rightly emphasized the importance of *swadeshi* and thereanent of greater sacrifice by merchants

India cannot be free so long as India voluntarily encourages or tolerates the economic drain which has been going on for the past century and a half. Boycott of foreign goods means no more and no less than boycott of foreign cloth. Foreign cloth constitutes the largest drain voluntarily permitted by us. It means sixty crores of rupees annually paid by us for piece-goods. If India could make a successful effort to stop that drain, she can gain *swaraj* by that one act.

India was enslaved for satisfying the greed of the foreign cloth manufacturer. When the East India Company came in, we were able to manufacture all the cloth we needed, and more for export. By processes that need not be described here,

India has become practically wholly dependent upon foreign manufacture for her clothing.

But we ought not to be dependent. India has the ability to manufacture all her cloth if her children will work for it. Fortunately India has yet enough weavers to supplement the out-turn of her mills. The mills do not and cannot immediately manufacture all the cloth we want. The reader may not know that, even at the present moment, the weavers weave more cloth than the mills. But the latter weave five crore yards of fine foreign counts, equal to forty crore yards of coarser counts. The way to carry out a successful boycott of foreign cloth is to increase the output of yarn. And this can only be done by hand-spinning.

To bring about such a boycott, it is necessary for our merchants to stop all foreign importation, and to sell out, even at a loss, all foreign cloth already stocked in India, preferably to foreign buyers. They must cease to speculate in cotton, and keep all the cotton required for home use. They must stop purchasing all foreign cotton.

The mill-owners should work their mills not for their profits but as a national trust and therefore cease to spin finer counts, and weave only for the home market.

The householder has to revise his or her ideas of fashion and, at least for the time being, suspend the use of fine garments which are not always worn to cover the body. He should train himself to see art and beauty in the spotlessly white *khaddar* and to appreciate its soft unevenness. The householder must learn to use cloth as a miser uses his hoard.

And even when the householders have revised their tastes about dress, somebody will have to spin yarn for the weavers. This can only be done by everyone spinning during spare hours either for love or money.

We are engaged in a spiritual war. We are not living in normal times. Normal activities are always suspended in abnormal times. And if we are out to gain *swaraj* in a year's time, it means that we must concentrate upon our goal to the exclusion of everything else. I therefore venture to suggest to the students all over India to suspend their normal studies for one year and devote their time to the manufacture of yarn by hand-spinning. It will be their greatest act of service to the

motherland, and their most natural contribution to the attainment of *swaraj*. During the late War our rulers attempted to turn every factory into an arsenal for turning out bullets of lead. During this war of ours, I suggest every national school and college being turned into a factory for preparing cones of yarns for the nation. The students will lose nothing by the occupation: they will gain a kingdom here and hereafter. There is a famine of cloth in India. To assist in removing this dearth is surely an act of merit. If it is sinful to use foreign yarn, it is a virtue to manufacture more *swadeshi* yarn in order to enable us to cope with the want that would be created by the disuse of foreign yarn.

The obvious question asked would be, 'If it is so necessary to manufacture yarn, why not pay every poor person to do so?' The answer is that hand-spinning is not, and never was, a calling like weaving, carpentry, etc. Under the pre-British economy of India, spinning was an honourable and leisurely occupation for the women of India. It is difficult to revive the art among the women in the time at our disposal. But it is incredibly simple and easy for the school-goers to respond to the nation's call. Let no one decry the work as being derogatory to the dignity of man or of students. It was an art confined to the women of India because the latter had more leisure. And being graceful, musical, and as it did not involve any great exertion, it had become the monopoly of women. But it is certainly as graceful for either sex as is music, for instance. In hand-spinning is hidden the protection of women's virtue, the insurance against famine, and the cheapening of prices. In it is hidden the secret of *swaraj*. The revival of hand-spinning is the least penance we must do for the sin of our forefathers in having succumbed to Satanic influences of the foreign manufacturer.

The school-goers will restore hand-spinning to its respectable status. They will hasten the process of making *khaddar* fashionable. For no mother, or father, worth the name will refuse to wear cloth made out of yarn spun by their children. And the scholars' practical recognition of art will compel the attention of the weavers of India. If we are to wean the Punjabi from the calling not of a soldier but of the murderer of innocent and free people of other lands, we must give back to

him the occupation of weaving. The race of the peaceful *julahis*<sup>1</sup> of the Punjab is all but extinct. It is for the scholars of the Punjab to make it possible for the Punjabi weaver to return to his innocent calling.

I hope to show in a future issue how easy it is to introduce this change in the schools and how quickly, on these terms, we can nationalize our schools and colleges. Everywhere the students have asked me what new things I would introduce into our nationalized schools. I have invariably told them I would certainly introduce spinning. I feel, so much more clearly than ever before, that, during the transition period, we must devote exclusive attention to spinning and certain other things of immediate national use, so as to make up for past neglect. And the students will be better able and equipped to enter upon the new course of studies.

Do I want to put back the hand of the clock of progress? Do I want to replace the mills by hand-spinning and hand-weaving? Do I want to replace the railway by the country cart? Do I want to destroy machinery altogether? These questions have been asked by some journalists and public men. My answer is I would not weep over the disappearance of machinery or consider it a calamity. But I have no design upon machinery as such. What I want to do at the present moment is to supplement the production of yarn and cloth through our mill, save the millions we send out of India, and distribute them in our cottages. This I cannot do unless and until the nation is prepared to devote its leisure hours to hand-spinning. To that end we must adopt the methods I have ventured to suggest for popularizing spinning as a duty rather than as a means of livelihood.

*The Secret of Swaraj*  
*Young India* 19 Jan. 1921

<sup>1</sup> Weavers.

## 163. VOLUNTARY CO-OPERATION AND PAUPERISM

Probably very few workers have noticed that progress of hand-spinning means the greatest voluntary co-operation the world has ever seen. It means co-operation among millions of human beings scattered over a very wide area and working for their daily bread. No doubt agriculture has required much co-operative effort, but hand-spinning requires still greater and more honest co-operation. Wheat grows more by nature's honesty than by man's. Manufacture of yarn in our cottages is dependent solely on human honesty. Hand-spinning is impossible without the willing and intelligent co-operation of millions of human beings. We have to arrive at a stage when the spinner like the grain-seller is assured of a steady market for his yarn as well as the supply of cotton slivers if he or she does not know the process of carding. Is it any wonder if I claim that hand-spinning can drive away as if by magic the growing pauperism of the masses? An English friend sends me a newspaper cutting showing the progress of machinery in China. He has evidently imagined that in advocating hand-spinning I am propagating my ideas about machinery. I am doing nothing of the kind.

I would favour the use of the most elaborate machinery if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided. I have suggested hand-spinning as the only ready means of driving away penury and ridding famine of work and wealth impossible. The spinning-wheel itself is a piece of valuable machinery, and in my own humble way I have tried to secure improvements in it in keeping with the special conditions of India. The only question therefore that a lover of India and humanity has to address himself to is how best to devise practical means of alleviating India's wretchedness and misery. No scheme of irrigation or other agricultural improvement that human ingenuity can conceive can deal with the vastly scattered population of India or provide work for masses of mankind who are constantly thrown out of employment. Imagine a nation working only five hours per day on an average, and this not by choice but by force of circumstances, and you have a realistic picture of India.

If the reader would visualize the picture, he must dismiss

from his mind the busy fuss of the city life or the grinding fatigue of the factory life or the slavery of the plantations. These are but drops in the ocean of Indian humanity. If he would visualize the picture of the Indian skeleton, he must think of the eighty per cent of the population which is working its own fields and which has practically no occupation for at least four months in the year and which therefore lives on the borderland of starvation. This is the normal condition. The ever-recurring famines make a large addition to this enforced idleness. What is the work that these men and women can easily do in their own cottages so as to supplement their very slender resources? Does anyone still doubt that it is only hand-spinning and nothing else? And I repeat that this can be made universal in a few months' time, if only the workers will. Indeed it is on a fair way to becoming universal. Experts only are needed to organize it.

People are ready, and what is most in favour of hand-spinning is that it is not a new and untried method but people have up to recently been using it. Its successful reintroduction does need skillful endeavour, honesty and co-operation on the largest scale known to the world. And if India can achieve this co-operation, who shall deny that India has by that one act achieved *swaraj*?

'Co-operation'

*Young India*, 3 Nov. 1921

#### 164. THE REVOLVING WHEEL

Baro Dada Dwijendranath Tagore as the reader knows has a weakness for me. Almost everything I say or do appeals to him with an irresistible force. The reader is therefore entitled to discount his approval of my ideas and schemes. But he cannot but admire Baro Dada's zeal and devotion for his country which make him keep in touch with the current thought in our politics. Here is his latest on the spinning-wheel:

In practice, though not in theory, most self-important people

fondly believe that what seems improbable to them is impossible and what seems probable to them is alone possible. The enemies of Napoleon once thought that it was as impossible for an army to cross the Alps during the winter season as it would be to take a flight to the moon by means of a balloon; but Napoleon thought otherwise. To his penetrating view, crossing the Alps was the only means possible by which he could gain entrance into Italy.

In like manner most of our countrymen think it utterly impossible that the cause of our economical, if not political, freedom can advance a single step by such a simple thing as plying the *charkha*; while on the other hand Mahatmaji thinks that that is the only means possible by adopting which we can hope to reach the goal of our endeavour.

Baro Dada adds in a footnote that a *charkha* is philologically equivalent to a circle and metaphorically to the revolving wheel of the universe—*samsara*. One of Kabir's songs is based on this imagery. But the most important part of Baro Dada's letter is his emphasis on the stern fact that howsoever impossible the *charkha* may appear to the worldly-wise, it is the only possible thing for the country's real advance. It is the only thing that can give substance to any big political move that the country may make.

'The Revolving Wheel'

*Young India*, 15 Jan. 1925

#### 165. SWADESHI IS SERVICE

A friend from Kathiawar writes as follows . . .<sup>1</sup>

Many readers will immediately see the fallacies in this letter. Even so, since one often hears similar views expressed by others, it is necessary to explain again the meaning of *swadeshi* as clearly as one can. Moreover, we suffer a great deal through an abuse of the idea of *swadeshi*. If many of the activities which are being carried on in the name of *swadeshi* were stopped and the effort spent on true *swadeshi*, we should achieve our goal much earlier.

I am sure that I have become more and not less scrupulous

in following the vow of *swadeshi*. I have been following it, as I had conceived it in 1920, and am following it even more scrupulously today. We may certainly accept a foreign needle, since it is a useful article and can be assimilated. By accepting it, we harm no industry or craft in the country and its acceptance, therefore, does not throw anyone out of employment. On the contrary, the needle provides work to hundreds, work which benefits the country. Foreign cloth may be good in quality, and cheaper, may even be offered free; even then, it should be rejected, for its acceptance has ruined crores of our countrymen. We had been producing cloth in our own villages, and have found no other work in place of that industry. We committed a great sin in abandoning it. Its abandonment resulted in starvation, and that led to an increase in disease, crime and immorality.

If ever the time comes when the people of this country will have another, more honest occupation than spinning and weaving and when the cotton cannot be grown on the soil of this land or when the cultivators themselves will prefer to grow another, more profitable crop, then the vow of *swadeshi* cloth may serve no useful purpose. If future generations, reading the literature of this age, regard this vow as an immutable principle and even at that time apply the principle of *swadeshi* to cloth, they will show themselves foolish and will be acting like people who drown themselves in their ancestral well instead of swimming across it. My reason cannot conceive of such a time ever coming. Whether it comes or not, there can be no two opinions that in our present condition *khadi* is the purest form of *swadeshi* and we can even say that now there are no two opinions about it.

Raw materials worth crores of rupees are produced in this country and, thanks to our ignorance, lethargy and lack of invention, exported to foreign countries; the result is, as Shri Madhusudan Das has pointed out, that we remain ignorant like animals, our hands do not get the training which they ought to and our intellects do not develop as they should. As a consequence, living art has disappeared from our land and we are content to imitate the West. As long as we cannot make the machines required for utilizing the hide of dead cattle, worth nine crores, available in our country, I would be



ready to import them from any part of the world and would still believe that I was scrupulously keeping the vow of *swadeshi*. I would believe that I would be only discrediting that vow by refusing, out of obstinacy, to import those machines. Similarly our country produces a great many things with medicinal properties, and those come back to us in the form of a variety of drugs or other articles. It is our duty to import any machines, and obtain any help which will enable us to utilize these things in our own country.

*Swadeshi* is an eternal religious duty. The manner of following it may and ought to change from age to age. The principle of *swadeshi* is the soul and *khadi* is its body in this age and in this country. If in the course of time this body perishes, *swadeshi* will assume a new body but the soul dwelling in it will be the same. *Swadeshi* is service, and if we understand its nature we shall simultaneously benefit ourselves, our families, our country and the world. *Swadeshi* is not intended to serve self-interest but is pure altruism, and hence I call it a form of *rajna*. It certainly benefits ourselves, but there is no room in it for hatred of others. There can be no absolute duty of not importing anything at any time only, we may not import anything which may harm the country. Nor can it be accepted as an absolute principle that everything that belongs to or is produced by one's own country is good. Anything, whether indigenous or foreign, which is good and serves our interest should be readily accepted and likewise anything, indigenous or foreign, which is bad and harmful should be rejected. The country produces a huge quantity of liquor, but all of it deserves to be shunned. There is no reason to believe that, if the whole country gives up drinking, those engaged in the liquor trade will be ruined. Their present business harms themselves and the country and they will not starve if they lose it, there will be other, better occupations which they can follow.

'Swadeshi v. Foreign' (G  
Naiyan, 19 June 1927)

<sup>1</sup> The correspondent had criticized Gandhi's view that foreign articles which could not be manufactured in India and which were useful should be readily accepted.

## 166. THE DOCTRINE OF SWADESHI

*Swadeshi* is the law of laws enjoined by the present age. Spiritual laws, like Nature's laws, need no enacting; they are self-acting. But through ignorance or other causes man often neglects or disobeys them. It is then vows are needed to steady one's course. A man who is by temperament a vegetarian needs no vow to strengthen his vegetarianism. For, the sight of animal food, instead of tempting him, would only excite his disgust. The law of *swadeshi* is ingrained in the basic nature of man but it has today sunk into oblivion. Hence the necessity for the vow of *swadeshi*. In its ultimate and spiritual sense *swadeshi* stands for the final emancipation of the human soul from its earthly bondage. For, this earthly tabernacle is not its natural or permanent abode, it is a hindrance in its onward journey, it stands in the way of its realizing its oneness with other lives. A votary of *swadeshi* therefore, in his striving to identify himself with the entire creation, seeks to be emancipated from the bondage of the physical body.

If this interpretation of *swadeshi* be correct, then it follows that its votary will as a first duty dedicate himself to the service of his immediate neighbours. This involves exclusion or even sacrifice of the interests of the rest but the exclusion or the sacrifice would be apparent only. Pure service of one's neighbours can never, from its very nature, result in disservice to those who are remotely situated, rather the contrary. 'As with the individual so with the universe' is an unfailing principle which we would do well to lay to heart. On the other hand, a man who allows himself to be lured by 'the distant scene' and runs to the ends of the earth for service is not only foiled in his ambition but fails in his duty towards his neighbours also. Take a concrete instance. In the particular place where I live I have certain persons as my neighbours, some relations and dependents. Naturally, they all feel, as they have a right to, that they have a claim on me and look to me for help and support. Suppose now I leave them all at once and set out to serve people in a distant place. My decision would throw my little world of neighbours and dependents out of gear while my gratuitous knight-errantry would more likely than not disturb the atmosphere in the new place. Thus a

culpable neglect of my immediate neighbours and an unintended disservice to the people whom I wish to serve would be the first fruits of my violation of the principles of *swadeshi*.

It is not difficult to multiply such instances. That is why the *Gita* says: 'It is better to die performing one's duty or *swadharma*, but *paradharma*, or another's duty, is fraught with danger.'<sup>1</sup> Interpreted in terms of one's physical environment this gives us the law of *swadeshi*. What the *Gita* says with regard to *swadharma* equally applies to *swadeshi* also, for *swadeshi* is *swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment.

It is only when the doctrine of *swadeshi* is wrongly understood that mischief results, e.g., it would be a travesty of the doctrine of *swadeshi*, if to coddle my family I set about grabbing money by all means fair or foul. The law of *swadeshi* requires me no more than to discharge my legitimate obligations towards my family by just means, and the attempt to do so will reveal to me the Universal Code of Conduct. The practice of *swadeshi* can never do harm to anyone and if it does it is not *swadharma* but egotism that moves me.

There may come occasions when a votary of *swadeshi* may be called upon to sacrifice his family at the altar of universal service. Such an act of willing immolation will then constitute the highest service rendered to the family. 'Whosoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whosoever loses his life for the Lord's sake will find it', holds good for the family group no less than the individual. Take another instance. Supposing there is an outbreak of the plague in my village and in trying to serve the victims of the epidemic I, my wife and children and all the rest of my family are wiped out of existence, then in inducing those dearest and nearest to join me I will not have acted as the destroyer of my family but on the contrary as its truest friend. In *swadeshi* there is no room for selfishness, or if there is selfishness in it, it is of the highest type which is not different from the highest altruism. *Swadeshi* in its purest form is the acme of universal service.

It was by following this line of argument that I hit upon *khadi* as a necessary and the most important corollary of the principle of *swadeshi* in its application to society. 'What is the kind of service', I asked myself, 'that the teeming millions of India most need at the present time, that can be easily un-

derstood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will at the same time enable the crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live', and the reply came that it is the universalization of *khadi* or the spinning-wheel alone that can fulfil these conditions.

Let no one suppose that the practice of *swadeshi* through *khadi* would harm the foreign mill-owners. A thief who is weaned from his vice or is made to return the property that he has stolen is not harmed thereby, on the contrary he is the gainer consciously in the one case, unconsciously in the other. Similarly if all the opium addicts or the drunkards in the world were to shake themselves free from their vice, the canteen keepers or the opium vendors who would be deprived of their customers could not be said to be losers. They would be the gainers in the truest sense of the word. The elimination of the 'wages of sin' is never a loss either to the individual concerned or to society; it is pure gain.

It is the greatest delusion to suppose that the duty of *swadeshi* begins and ends with merely spinning so much yarn anyhow and wearing *khadi* made from it. *Khadi* is the first indispensable step towards the discharge of *swadeshi dharma* towards society. One often meets men who wear *khadi* but in all other things indulge their taste for foreign manufactures with a vengeance. Such men cannot be said to be practising *swadeshi*. They are simply following the fashion. A votary of *swadeshi* will carefully study his environment and try to help his neighbours wherever possible by giving preference to local manufactures even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects but will not give them up because of their defects and take to foreign manufactures.

But even *swadeshi* like any other good thing can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger that must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money to promote manufactures in one's country for which it is not suited would be criminal folly and a negation of the *swadeshi* spirit. A true votary of *swadeshi* will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner, he will not be moved by antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshism is not a

cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest *ahimsa*, i.e., love.

'The Law of *Swadeshi*'

*Navajivan*, 31 Apr. 1931 (G.)

*Young India*, 18 June 1931

<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad Gita* III 35

#### 167. ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

December 27, 1936

This speech was scheduled for 8.30. I am sorry that it is being delivered so late at 9.15. But there was no alternative. People have turned up here in such large numbers and as our exhibition has only screens of unseasoned bamboo for walls, if everyone makes a rush for it they would collapse. Hence, arrangements had to be made to protect things and the organizers took some time in doing this. They were not prepared for such an onrush. You will feel that there has been a trick in putting my speech on the programme. This was deliberate. If for no other reason, people would come to hear me and give two annas for the exhibition. While doing so if they by accident or mistake purchase some *khadi* and have a glimpse of rural art, they will earn some merit without any particular effort and so will I.

You must have seen that the whole of Tilaknagar is like an exhibition. The credit for this goes to Shri Nandalal Bose. It was he who decided that the plan for both the exhibition and the Congress should be the same. Only a paltry sum has been spent in doing so. I do not know of any Congress session which has been organized at such a low cost. Of course, in my opinion, some expenses have been unnecessarily incurred, but, then, is this not the first Congress to be held in a village? A fair amount had to be spent in obtaining land. But we have done something which will encourage us to hold the future sessions of the Congress in villages. You can see the crowd is increasing. There are many volunteers, but they seem to get lost in

the crowd. There are so many persons who have to be fed that it has become difficult to make arrangements for them.

I am going to say nothing new today. The cult of the spinning-wheel is 18 years old. I said in 1918 that we could win *swaraj* through the spinning-wheel. My faith in the ability of the spinning-wheel is as bright today as when I first declared it in 1918. It has become richer for the experience and experiment of all these years.

But you should know the implications of the wheel or *khadi*, its product. It is not enough that one wears *khadi* on ceremonial occasions or even wears it to the exclusion of all other cloth if he surrounds himself with *udeshi* in everything else. *Khadi* means the truest *swadeshi* spirit, identification with the starving millions.

Let there be no mistake about my conception of *swaraj*. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is *dharma*, i.e., religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of 'Truth, not the honesty of expedience but the living Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used to, i.e., non-violence. Let us call this the square of *swaraj*, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. In the language of the Congress we cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without truth and non-violence, in concrete terms without a living faith in God and hence moral and social elevation.

By political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be is more than I can tell. I have described it as *Ramarajya*, i.e., sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. The Congress constitutions of Nagpur and Bombay for which I am mainly responsible are an attempt to achieve this type of *swaraj*.

Then take economic independence. It is not a product of industrialization of the modern or the Western type. Indian economic independence means to me the economic uplift of every individual, male and female, by his or her own conscious effort. Under that system all men and women will have enough clothing—not the mere loin-cloth, but what we understand by the term necessary articles of clothing and enough food including milk and butter which are today denied to millions.

This brings me to socialism. Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: 'All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line?' Man is the maker of the line and he can therefore unmake it.' Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it means the State, i.e., the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it.

I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.

Let us now see how India came to be utterly impoverished. History tells us that the East India Company ruined the cotton manufacture and by all kinds of means made her dependent upon Lancashire for her cloth, the next great necessity of man. It is still the largest item of import. It thus created a huge army of partially unemployed men and women counted in millions and gave them no other employment in return. With the destruction of hand-ginning, carding, spinning and weaving to a certain extent, perished the other industries of India's villages. Continuous unemployment has induced in the people a kind of laziness which is most depressing. Thus whilst the alien rule is undoubtedly responsible for the growing pauperism of the people, we are more responsible for it. If the middle-class people, who betrayed their trust and bartered away the economic independence of India for a mess of pottage, would now realize their error and take the message of the wheel to the villagers and induce them to shed their lazy-

ness and work at the wheel, we can ameliorate the condition of the people to a great extent. It would be a terrible thing if laziness replaces industry and despair triumphs over hope.

The parliamentary programme is in the air. It has come to stay and rightly. But it cannot bring us independence. Its function is strictly limited though quite necessary. Its success will prevent the Government from claiming that Ordinance rule or any measure restricting our progress to the goal was sanctioned by popular representatives. Hence the necessity for voters voting for the Congress candidates who dare not vote for unpopular measures without being liable to Congress discipline. The success of that programme may also bring some relief in individual cases such as the release of Shri Subhas Bose or the detenus. But that is not independence, political or economic.

Then look at it in another way. Only a limited number of men and women can become members of legislatures, say 1,500. How many from this audience can become legislators? And just now no more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores can vote for these 1,500 members. What about the remaining  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores? In our conception of *swaraj* they are the real masters and the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores are the former's servants who in their turn are masters of the 1,500. Thus the latter are doubly servants, if they will be true to their trust.

But the  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores have also a trust to discharge towards themselves and the nation of which they as individuals are but tiny parts. And if they remain lazy, know nothing of *swaraj* and how to win it, they will themselves become slaves of the 1,500 legislators. For my argument the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores of voters here belong to the same category as the  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores. For if they do not become industrious and wise, they will be so many pawns in the hands of 1,500 players, it is of little consequence whether they are Congressmen or otherwise. If the voters wake up only to register their votes every three years or more and then go off to sleep, their servants will become their masters.

The only way I know to prevent such a catastrophe is for the 35 crores to be industrious and wise. This they can only be if they will take up the spinning-wheel and the other village industries. They will not take to them unintelligently. I can tell you from experience that the effort means adult education



of the correct type and requires possession of patience, moral fibre and a scientific and practical knowledge of the industry the worker seeks to introduce in the village of his choice.

In such a scheme the spinning-wheel becomes its centre. If you call it the solar system, the wheel becomes the golden disc and the industries the planets revolving round it in obedience to the inviolable law of the system. When the sun lost its illuminating power by the action of the East India Company, the planets lost their power and became invisible or almost so. The sun is being reinstated in his past status now and the planets are regaining their motion in exact proportion to the strength of the sun.

Now perhaps you will understand the meaning and the message of the *charkha*. I said in 1920 that if the Congress truly and successfully worked the programme laid down in 1920 including the fourfold Constructive Programme of *khadi*, communal unity, prohibition of intoxicants and removal by Hindus of untouchability, the attainment of *swaraj* within a year was a certainty. I am neither sorry for nor ashamed of having made that declaration. I would like to repeat that declaration before you today. Whenever the fourfold programme is achieved in its fulness, you can have *swaraj* for the asking. For you will then have attained the power to take it. Just think for a moment where the *charkha* stands today in your faith or action. Is the mutual secret assassination of Bombay a sign of communal unity? Where is total prohibition? Have the Hindus rid themselves of untouchability root and branch? One swallow does not make a summer. Traiancore's great Proclamation may be the beginning of the end, but it is not the end. If we remove the untouchability of *Harijans*, but treat Mussalmans or others as such, we have not removed the blot. 'All land belongs to God' has a deeper meaning. Like the earth we, of it, also belong to God, and hence we must all feel like one and not erect boundary walls and issue prohibition decrees against one another.

This is the non-violent way in action. If we could fulfil this programme, there would be no need to offer civil disobedience, there would certainly be no need to do violence. Thirty-five crores of people conscious of their numerical strength as one man would be ashamed of doing violence to

70,000 white men in India, no matter how capable they are of dealing destruction and administering poison gas to millions in a moment. The *charkha* understood intelligently can spin not only economic salvation but can also revolutionize our minds and hearts and demonstrate to us that the non-violent approach to *swaraj* is the safest and the easiest. Though the progress may seem slow, it will prove quickest in the long run.

Believe me if Jawaharlal is not in jail today, it is not because he is afraid of it. He is quite capable of walking into prison doors as of mounting the gallows with a smile on his lips. I do not think I have lost the power or faith in the efficacy of such suffering. But there is no issue for it today as far as I can see. But what I feel is that all that suffering can be avoided if by united faith and will we achieve the Constructive Programme. If we can, I promise that we won't need to struggle with or against the British nation, but Lord Linlithgow will come to us and own that he was mistaken in his disbelief of our non-violence and truth and will undertake on behalf of his nation to abide by our decisions. Whether he does or not, I am working towards that and no other. 'All belong to God.'

Speech at Exhibition Ground, Faizpur

*Haryan*, 2 Jan. 1937

*Hanjanbandhu*, 3 Jan. 1937

#### 168. SELF-RELIANCE

May 5, 1945

Satyanarayanji,

If you understand individual self-reliance, you should understand the self-reliance of a society or an institution. If an individual believes that he will get his bread if he puts in earnest labour, then the same is true of an institution. That is to say, if it renders service, it will get bread without asking, meaning thereby that it will get the money to meet its expenses. In fact, it should get the money from its neighbours. If it does not get it, then it should realize that no one cares for its services. Such a thing can happen while dispelling ignorance

in a land of blind faith. Then the expenses will be borne by the reformers. The same rule will apply here too. The reformers in the beginning will starve, a few of them will even die. We must have faith that God will sustain them in some way or other. If you don't fully understand this, we shall discuss it. We won't go further than that. I will discuss it only if you want it. However, I would love it.

Blessings from  
BAPU

Letter to M. Sivanthi in H.  
Pyaal Paper

#### 169 THE CHARKHA AND EQUALITY

Gandhi Camp, Patna,  
April 28, 1947

How can we afford to forget the *charkha*? The spirit behind spinning implies equality of all. The *charkha* teaches us the unique lesson of identifying ourselves with the forty crores and be in perfect harmony with them. It will not admit of any distinction of high and low, master and servant, which is the cause of conflict in the world today, isn't it? The *charkha* warns us against it. How can we, therefore, fail to worship God in the form of the *charkha*?

Remark to Manu Gandhi. G.  
*Bihari Komi Igman* p. 27,

#### 170 SELF-RELIANCE AND AHIMSA

June 15, 1947

Only the self-reliant man can progress towards success in any task. This is as true of a country as of a man. At present we have no faith in *ahimsa* because we have no self-reliance. It has become second nature with us in every matter to look to

other people or other nations. As a result we have become so weak in body, mind and resources that we cannot protect even our own selves. That is why I tell Rajendrababu every day that it is better for us to starve than to import even a single grain of food from outside. But mine is a voice in the wilderness. Or could it be that I am growing too old and therefore losing my grip over things?

'A Letter' (G.)

*Bihar Pachhi Dulhi*, p. 142.

#### 171. THE SPIRIT OF SWADESHI

I am told that with the advent of *swadeshi raj* in the shape of *swaraj*, the spirit of *swadeshi* is fast disappearing from the land. The stock of *khadi* is perhaps at its lowest. It is no unusual sight to see what are called Gandhi *topies* worn by men who are otherwise clad in *paradeshi*. If that is true on any large scale, the dearly loved liberty, in my opinion, would be short-lived. Goodbye then to the hope of India becoming the Light of Asia, as by right it should be. *Paradeshi* goes side by side with luxury which a correspondent says is rampant everywhere. I fondly hope that whilst the tragic picture might be true of the cities of India, it is not so of the villages, if only because they were famishing.

Immediately after my return to India in 1915 I discovered that the centre of *swadeshi* lay in *khadi*. If *khadi* goes, I contended even then, there is no *swadeshi*. I have shown that the manufactures in Indian mills do not constitute *swadeshi*. To that belief I cling even today.

Think of the bonfire of foreign cloth we had during our first national struggle. Shri Sarojini Naidu and Pandit Motilal Nehru threw their fineries in it. Pandit Motilal Nehru later wrote from jail that he had found true happiness in the simplicity and purity of *khadi*. It is sad that that spirit does not exist today. The *charkha* is the centre of our tricolour flag. It is the symbol of unity and the non-violent strength of the millions. The yarn spun by the *charkha* I consider to be the

cementing force which can bind those whom the three colours of the flag represent. That is why I have said that the whole fabric of *swaraj* hangs on a thread of the handspun yarn and have called the *charkha* our mightiest weapon. Where is that wheel today?

I have already reminded you that if you have the *swadeshi* spirit in you, you will refuse to look to the West for the supply of your major wants. I have no quarrel in this time of extreme scarcity if India imports foodstuffs and cloth from outside, provided it is proved that India is wholly unable to supply the two wants from within India. This is in no way proved. I have not hesitated to say and I would repeat that India is fully able to manufacture her own *khadi* and grow her own foodstuffs in her numerous villages. But alas! the people have become too lazy to look inward and insist on supplying these two wants from within India's borders. I will go even so far as to say that I will face starvation and nakedness rather than look to the West to supply the two needs. Without grim determination it is not possible to do the right thing

'*Swadeshi*'

*Harijan*, 20 June 1947

## § 2. Education

### 172. MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT OF 'SPIRIT, MIND, AND BODY

'The English word 'education' etymologically means 'drawing out'. That means an endeavour to develop our latent talents. The same is the meaning of *kelavan*, the Gujarati word for education. When we say that we develop a certain thing, it does not mean that we change its kind or quality, but that we bring out the qualities latent in it. Hence 'education' can also mean 'unfoldment'.

In this sense, we cannot look upon knowledge of the alphabet as education. This is true even if that knowledge gains us the M.A. degree or enables us to adorn the place of a *shastri*<sup>1</sup>

in some *pathshala*<sup>2</sup> with the requisite knowledge of Sanskrit. It may well be that the highest literary knowledge is a fine instrument for education or unfoldment, but it certainly does not itself constitute education.

True education is something different. Man is made of three constituents, the body, mind and spirit. Of them, spirit is the one permanent element in man. The body and the mind function on account of it. Hence we can call that education which reveals the qualities of spirit. That is why the seal of the Vidyapith carries the dictum 'Education is that which leads to *moksha*.'

Education can also be understood in another sense; that is, whatever leads to a full or maximum development of all the three, the body, mind and spirit, may also be called education. The knowledge that is being imparted today may possibly develop the mind a little, but certainly it does not develop the body and spirit. I have a doubt about the development of the mind too, because it does not mean that the mind has developed if we have filled it with a lot of information. We cannot therefore say that we have educated our mind. A well-educated mind serves man in the desired manner. Our literate mind of today pulls us hither and thither. That is what a wild horse does. Only when a wild horse is broken in can we call it a trained horse. How many 'educated' young men of today are so trained?

Now let us examine our body. Are we supposed to cultivate the body by playing tennis, football or cricket for an hour every day? It does, certainly, build up the body. Like a wild horse, however, the body will be strong but not trained. A trained body is healthy, vigorous and sinewy. The hands and feet can do any desired work. A pickaxe, a shovel, a hammer, etc., are like ornaments to a trained hand and it can wield them. That hand can ply the spinning-wheel well as also the ring and the comb while the feet work a loom. A well-trained body does not get tired in trudging 30 miles. It can scale mountains without getting breathless. Does the student acquire such physical culture? We can assert that modern curricula do not impart physical education in this sense.

The less said about the spirit the better. Only a seer or a seeker can enlighten the soul. Who will awaken that dormant

spiritual energy in us all? Teachers can be had through an advertisement. Is there a column for spiritual quest in the testimonials which they have to produce? Even if there is one, what is its value? How can we get through advertisements teachers who are seekers after self-realization? And education without such enlightenment is like a wall without a foundation or, to employ an English saying, like a whited sepulchre. Inside it there is only a corpse eaten up or being eaten by insects.

It is and should be the ideal of the Gujarat Vidyapith to impart this three-fold education. Even if one young man or woman is brought up in conformity with this ideal, I shall regard the Vidyapith's existence as worth while.

What I Education? G.

*Narayan* 28 Feb. 1926

<sup>1</sup> Teacher

<sup>2</sup> Indigenous school

### I / 3 SCHOLASTIC AND MORAL EDUCATION

November 24, 1927

It has given me the greatest pleasure to be able to be present at this very pleasant function. You have paid me indeed a very great compliment and conferred on me a great honour by allowing me to witness your proceedings and making the acquaintance of so many boys.

I hope that this institution will progressively expand, as, I have no doubt, it deserves. I have come to know enough of this beautiful island and its people to understand that there are Buddhists enough in this country, not merely to support one such institution but many such institutions. I hope, therefore, that this institution will never have to pine for want of material support, but having known something of the educational institutions both in South Africa and India, let me tell you that scholastic education is not merely brick and mortar. It is true boys and true girls who build such institutions from day to day. I know some huge architecturally perfect buildings going under the name of scholastic institutions, but they are

nothing but whited sepulchres. Conversely, I know also some institutions which have to struggle from day to day for their material existence, but which because of this very want, are spiritually making advance from day to day. One of the greatest teachers that mankind has ever seen and one whom you have enthroned as the only Royal Monarch in your hearts delivered his living message not from a man-made building, but under the shadow of a magnificent tree. May I also venture to suggest that the aim of a great institution like this should be to impart such instruction and in such ways that it may be open to any boy or girl in Ceylon.

I notice already that, as in India, so in this country, you are making education daily more and more expensive so as to be beyond the reach of the poorest children. Let us all beware of making that serious blunder and incurring the deserved reproach of posterity. To that end let me put the greatest stress upon the desirability of giving these boys instruction from A to Z through the Sinhalese language. I am certain that the children of the nation that receive instruction in a tongue other than their own commit suicide. It robs them of their birthright. A foreign medium means an undue strain upon the youngsters, it robs them of all originality. It stunts their growth and isolates them from their home. I regard, therefore, such a thing as a national tragedy of first importance, and I would like also to suggest that since I have known Sanskrit in India as the mother language, and since you have received all religious instruction from the teachings of one who was himself an Indian amongst Indians and who had derived his inspiration from Sanskrit writings, that it would be but right on your part to introduce Sanskrit as one of the languages that should be diligently studied. I should expect an institution of this kind to supply the whole of the Buddhist community in Ceylon with textbooks written in Sinhalese and giving all the best from the treasures of old.

I hope that you will not consider that I have placed before you an unattainable ideal. Instances occur to me from history where teachers have made Herculean efforts in order to restore the dignity of the mother tongue and to restore the dignity of the old treasures which were about to be forgotten.

I am glad indeed that you are giving due attention to ath-



letics and I congratulate you upon acquitting yourselves with distinction in games. I do not know whether you had any indigenous games or not. I should, however, be exceedingly surprised, and even painfully surprised, if I were told that before cricket and football descended upon your sacred soil, your boys were devoid of all games. If you have national games, I would urge upon you that yours is an institution that should lead in reviving old games. I know that we have in India many noble indigenous games just as interesting and exciting as cricket or football, also as much attended with risks as football is, but with the added advantage that they are inexpensive, because the cost is practically next to nothing.

I am no indiscriminate, superstitious worshipper of all that goes under the name of 'ancient'. I never hesitated to demolish all that is evil or immoral, no matter how ancient an endeavour it may be, but with that reservation, I must confess to you that I am an adorer of ancient institutions and it hurts me to think that a people in their rush for everything modern despise all their ancient traditions and ignore them in their lives.

We of the East very often hastily consider that all that our ancestors laid down for us was nothing but a bundle of superstitions, but my own experience, extending now over a fairly long period, of the inestimable treasures of the East has led me to the conclusion that, whilst there may be much that was superstitious, there is infinitely more which is not only not superstitious, but if we understand it correctly and reduce it to practice, gives life and ennobles one. Let us not therefore be blinded by the hypnotic dazzle of the West.

Again I wish to utter a word of caution against your believing that I am an indiscriminate despiser of everything that comes from the West. There are many things which I have myself assimilated from the West. There is a very great and effective Sanskrit word for that particular faculty which enables a man always to distinguish between what is desirable and what is undesirable, what is right and what is wrong that word is known as *viveka*. Translated into English, the nearest approach is discrimination. I do hope that you will incorporate this word into Pali and Sinhalese.

There is one thing more which I would like to say in connection with your syllabus. I had hoped that I should see

some mention made of handicrafts, and if you are not seriously teaching the boys under your care some handicrafts, I would urge you, if it is not too late, to introduce the necessary handicrafts known to this island. Surely, all the boys who go out from this institution will not expect or will not desire to be clerks or employees of the Government. If they would add to the national strength, they must learn with great skill all the indigenous crafts, and as cultural training and as the symbol of identification with the poorest among the poor, I know nothing so ennobling as hand-spinning. Simple as it is, it is easily learnt. When you combine with hand-spinning the idea that you are learning it not for your own individual self, but for the poorest among the nation, it becomes an ennobling sacrament. There must be added to this sacrament some occupation, some handicraft which a boy may consider will enable him to earn his living in after life.

You have rightly found place for religious instruction. I have experimented with quite a number of boys in order to understand how best to impart religious instruction and whilst I found that book instruction was somewhat of an aid, by itself it was useless. Religious instruction, I discovered, was imparted by teachers living the religion themselves. I have found that boys imbibe more from the teachers' own lives than they do from the books that they read to them, or the lectures that they deliver to them with their lips. I have discovered to my great joy that boys and girls have unconsciously a faculty of penetration whereby they read the thoughts of their teachers. Woe to the teacher who teaches one thing with his lips, and carries another in his breast.

Now, just one or two sentences to boys only and I have done. As father of, you might say, many boys and girls, you might almost say of thousands of boys and girls, I want to tell you, boys, that after all you hold your destiny in your own hands. I do not care what you learn or what you do not learn in your school, if you will observe two conditions. One condition is that you must be fearlessly truthful against the heaviest odds under every circumstance imaginable. A truthful boy, a brave boy will never think of hurting even a fly. He will defend all the weak boys in his own school and help, whether inside or outside the school, all those who need his

help. A boy who does not observe personal purity of mind and body and action is a boy who should be driven out of any school. A chivalrous boy would always keep his mind pure, his eyes straight and his hands unpolluted. You do not need to go to any school to learn these fundamental maxims of life, and if you will have this triple character with you you will build on a solid foundation.

May then true *ahimsa* and purity be your shield for ever in your life. May God help you to realize all your noble ambition. I thank you once more for inviting me to take part in this function.

Speech at Mahinda College, Galle  
*With Gandhi in Ceylon* pp. 10, 9

#### 174 CHARACTER-BUILDING

Having written the three articles on primary education it is now easy for me to answer the following questions.

Q 1. You once said reducing the burden imposed by English on students would amount to saving so many years of their life. If we interpret national education to mean nation-wide education, how much would be the burden imposed upon society? How much that is in terms of years?

A. Let me first explain the meaning of the phrase 'reducing the burden imposed by English'. It is not my contention that students should not be taught English at all. But let us learn English as a foreign language in the same way that a Frenchman learns it. If we learn English only to that extent, we shall not have to carry the burden of thinking in English, speaking or writing it with correctness. In my opinion, at least five years of the student's life are wasted in carrying this burden. Not only this. Because of the strain caused during these five years, his capacity to think is affected, he becomes enfeebled in the body and, like blotting-paper absorbing ink, he starts merely imitating in a superficial manner. How much a person would learn if he spent five years in getting the knowledge he

needs through his mother-tongue! How much time he would save thereby! He would readily learn the best thoughts in his own language and be spared the burden of learning the difficult pronunciation of a foreign language.

Q. 2. Child education at one end and university education at the other are very expensive. Can these both be included in national education? Alternatively, do you have any scheme for providing equally solid education at a lower cost?

A. I have tried to show in those three articles how child education could become inexpensive, almost self-supporting. If we can fashion a university education which will aid primary education, it can be made inexpensive and students can acquire the necessary knowledge useful to the nation. If the phrase 'solid education' implies education similar to that provided by Government schools, the question is irrelevant, as I do not regard that education as solid. The education given in the national university or primary schools is distinct from that provided by Government schools and is very often of a novel and original kind. It is therefore solid in its own way.

Q. 3. Advocates of tradition try to inculcate in pupils devotion for the *guru*. They tell the pupils that learning can be acquired only by pleasing the *guru* and in no other manner; that if one does not please the *guru*, does not serve him and attend on him he may out of slyness withhold knowledge; that one should always be flattering him to keep him from being wicked in this way. Is this a definition of *gurubhakti*?

A. I am a believer in *gurubhakti*. However, every teacher cannot become a *guru*. The *guru* disciple relationship is spiritual and spontaneous, it is not artificial, it cannot be created through external pressure. Such *gurus* are still to be found in India. (It should not be necessary to warn that I am not speaking here of *gurus* who give *moksha*.) The question of flattering such a *guru* just does not arise. The respect towards such a *guru* can only be natural, the *guru*'s love is also of the same kind. Hence, the one is always ready to give and the other is always ready to receive. Common knowledge, on the other hand, is something which we can accept from anyone. I can

learn a lot from a carpenter with whom I have no connection and of whose faults I am aware, I can acquire a knowledge of carpentry from him just as I purchase goods from a shopkeeper. Of course, a certain type of faith is required even here. I cannot learn carpentry from a carpenter if I do not have faith in his knowledge of that subject. *Gurubhakti* is an altogether different matter. In character-building, which is the object of education, the relationship between the *guru* and his disciples is of utmost importance and where there is no *gurubhakti* in its pure form, there can be no character-building.

Questions on Education I (G)

*Vatajan*, 3 June 1928

#### 175 EDUCATION FOR ALL

Q 14 Ever since you made your entry into the public life of this country, there has been a tendency to approach you and get your views of a problem whenever a person or persons have been in doubt and have failed to reach a clear-cut conclusion. People are eager to know from you whether a certain thing on a certain occasion is right or not. I am only describing the situation as it really is. It shows that all your activity is basically of a religious nature. Would it be right that when you are not here, these decisions be delivered by a body of persons by a majority vote if necessary? If not, is it not necessary to create what may prove to be a continuous line of knowledgeable men, versed in the precepts of *dharma*?

A I do not deem it worthy that people should approach me and ask me to pronounce judgement on disputable points. It is true that all my activities, whatever their outward form, are fundamentally religious. But the fact that I am asked to pronounce judgement on every disputed matter shows that people have either not understood the principles which I follow in shaping my conduct, or they have doubts about them. And because I am known as a *mahatma* or respected as a good man, and our people are credulous and not given to thinking for themselves, they continue to put all forms of questions to

me. This may gratify my sense of pride or even help me up to a point in doing my work, but it does not appear to me that it helps in any appreciable way either the people or the questioners. Indeed, I have often felt how nice it would be if I stopped making any pronouncements and did whatever suggested itself to me silently. But in that case I must first stop this weekly that I am now conducting, as also severely cut down much of my present correspondence. That, however, would need a courage which I do not feel within myself. But, there is the great friend of man, the Lord of Death, who can extend his invitation to me at any time and put a stop to all this chatter on my part whether I agree or not.

I do not see any wrong in bodies or associations of men following my principles and giving their opinions on disputed questions by a majority vote when I am no more, or even now whilst I am alive. But as in the case of individuals so also in that of groups they must be inspired by the ideal of *dharma*.

Q. 15. The education in the Vidyapith is divided into three distinct stages: the primary, the secondary and the higher. How far would it be right to name these respectively as education for the village, education for the city, and education for those who would take up social service work?

A. I do not like the meanings suggested here by the correspondent to the primary, the secondary and the higher education, respectively. Why should we want village people to be satisfied merely with primary education? They too have a right to receive secondary and higher education—those of them at least who want it. And the boys in the cities cannot do without primary education. The object of all the three should be the prosperity of the villages.

Q. 16. Why do you always attach so much importance to music?

A. It is sad that the study of music is generally neglected in our country today. Without it, the entire educational system seems to me to be incomplete. Music brings sweetness to the individual and to the social life of the people. Even as *pranayama*<sup>1</sup> is necessary for the regulation of breath, so is music for

disciplining the voice. Dissemination of the knowledge of music among the people will greatly help in controlling and stopping the noise which is a usual feature of public meetings in this country. Music pacifies anger and its judicious use is highly helpful in leading a man to the vision of God. It does not mean shouting and shrieking a tune anyhow like a rigmarole, nor does it mean the singing of stage songs. I have already referred to its ordinary meaning above, but its deeper meaning is that our whole life should be sweet and musical like a song. It goes without saying that life cannot be made like that without the practice of virtues such as truth, honesty, etc. To make life musical means to make it one with God, to merge it in Him. He who has not rid himself of *raga* and *dwesha*, i.e., likes and dislikes, who has not tasted of the joy of service, cannot have any understanding of celestial music. A study of music, which does not take account of this deeper aspect of this divine art, has little or no value for me.

Q 17 The art of painting means expression of the emotions of the artist through line and colour. If this definition of painting were to be accepted, would you include painting as an essential part of the scheme of national education which should be universally taught to all?

A. I have never disparaged drawing and painting, though I have certainly deprecated the blots of ink and colour passing under its name. I doubt if painting as defined by the artist could be made universal. There is this difference between music and painting: While painting can be learnt only by a few who have a natural aptitude for it, music must be and can be learnt by all. In painting, too, drawing of straight lines and the figures of animate and inanimate objects can be taught to all. It is certainly useful and necessary and I want it to be taught to every child before it is taught the alphabet.

Q 18. Some people are of the view that such subjects as grammar, compound interest, higher geometry, etc., which the learners are apt to forget in after years, should not be included in the courses to be framed for purposes of national education. Do you agree to this? If you do, why should not Urdu also be put in the same category? When Hindus and Muslims feel the urge to come into close contact

with each other and to understand each other's culture, then only will the knowledge of Sanskrit and Urdu prove useful and lasting. Knowledge of Urdu will be put to active use and hence increase only when there is respect for and a desire to learn the culture of which Urdu is the vehicle. Until then it is bound to remain no more than a religious rite like the worship of Ganesh a formal affair without any practical value.

A. I do not understand why grammar, compound interest and higher geometry have all been classed together. I have always believed that grammar is absolutely necessary for the mastery of a language, and that grammar and higher geometry are highly interesting subjects. Both provide innocent, intellectual entertainment. I will, therefore, accord a place to both these subjects in national education for those who go in for higher education or wish to study the science of language. In the same way, he who wants to be good at accounts cannot do so without learning compound interest. Therefore, all the three things mentioned by the correspondent in the question will have their due place in the syllabus for national education. The point is that there are things which are common to all schemes of education. Today, we have to differentiate between Government education and National education because the former is detrimental to national development. But there are many things in Government schools which will and must also be in our schools. Thus, though there are points of similarity between the two, the atmosphere in Government schools strengthens the bonds of slavery and is used at critical moments to suppress us. Therefore, such schools are to be renounced. Besides, as we have already seen, a portion, at least, of the education imparted there is wholly unnecessary; it is just a burden and nothing more. But I am straying from the subject under discussion. I have thought it fit to offer this clarification under the impression that I might not have grasped the point behind this question.

Urdu stands apart from the above-mentioned subjects; the question of its study must be considered separately. Hindus and Muslims will ultimately unite but in our national schools we must continue to strive unremittingly to bring them closer together. For this, we must acquaint ourselves with each



other's religion. If the students forget whatever little of Urdu they learn, evidently they are not serious about its study and must be learning it only because they must. But this can also be said about Hindi. Only God knows how interest in Hindi or Urdu can be created among the students, but there is no doubt in my mind that its knowledge is necessary for the progress of the nation.

Q. 19. Students should have full freedom; there should be nothing which will obstruct their free growth; to achieve this objective the teachers should have no prejudices for or against anything; while they teach they should so conduct themselves as though they have no partiality for any particular rule or habit or principle. This ideal for a teacher is coming to be accepted in many places. Do you accept it?

A. What has been said above can be supported as well as opposed. If it does not help in preserving the real essence, it should be opposed, and if it does help, the students may well be allowed full freedom and the teachers remain as detached and neutral as they like. They may do what they wish with a view to securing the independence of the students, the only condition being that they must mix with the students to the extent of being one of them. In the language of Akha, I will say to them:

Live in the world as you like,  
But keep constantly before your mind  
The aim of attaining to God at any cost.

An ideal teacher never had nor should he ever have any other aim before him.

'Questions on Education V' (G.)  
*Navajwan*, 1 July 1928

<sup>1</sup> Breath-control

### § 3. Women

#### 176. THE SUFFRAGETTE MOVEMENT

Women in England have surpassed all expectations. When the Indian community started the struggle against the obnoxious law in the Transvaal, the suffragette movement in England was many months old. They are still continuing the struggle undaunted. The struggle of the Transvaal Indians is nothing when compared with the courage and the tenacity of these women. Moreover, they have to face opposition from many women. There is a much larger number of women against than in favour of franchise for themselves. Though a mere handful, these women do not admit defeat. The more they are repressed, the more the resistance they offer. Many of them have been to gaol. They have borne being kicked and stoned by base and cowardly men. There was a cable last week that they had resolved to intensify their struggle still further. There are taxes to be paid to the Government by these women or their husbands. If they do not pay the taxes, whatever things they possess can be auctioned. They may even be imprisoned. The women have now resolved that they will not pay any taxes or levies till they get their rights, but will rather allow their possessions to be auctioned, and they themselves will suffer imprisonment.

This courage and tenacity deserves to be emulated by the Transvaal Indians, in fact, by the whole Indian community. The Natal Indians think it much of a hardship if their goods are to be auctioned for trading without a licence. These people do not realize that the Government cannot auction the goods of a large number of people. But what would it matter if it did? If women can sacrifice their possessions for a matter like franchise, cannot we put up with a similar hardship while fighting for our livelihood? The movement of the suffragettes will go on for a long time, and they will keep up the agitation, resolute and tireless. They fight on with faith in truth, persuaded that, though they will not be there to enjoy the rights, if only the succeeding generations enjoy them, it will be as

good as if they had themselves done so. Indians have to fight with the same spirit.'

'Brave Women' (G.)

*Indian Opinion*, 28 Dec. 1907

## 177. WOMEN AND SELF-REALIZATION

[1926]

My ideal is this. A man should remain man and yet should become woman; similarly a woman should remain woman and yet become man. This means that man should cultivate the gentleness and the discrimination of woman; and woman should cast off her timidity and become brave and courageous.

It is said that women are jealous, but this does not mean that men are free from this failing or that all women are jealous. Women have to stay indoors for all the twenty-four hours and therefore their jealousy becomes more conspicuous. That is all.

\* \* \*

My patience in teaching you will be endless. It will end only when your readiness to learn ends.

\* \* \*

Both man and woman can become fearless. Man thinks that he can be fearless, but it is not always true; similarly, woman thinks she is weak and allows herself to be called so; this too is not right. Women have no need at all for fear. I will tell you what I heard about Mirabai the day before yesterday. Mirabai went to Vrindavan and knocked at the door of a *sadhu*. The *sadhu* replied from inside that he never looked at a woman. Mirabai asked him, 'Who are you? I know only one man, and that is Krishna.' On hearing this, the *sadhu* opened the door, fell at the feet of Mirabai and said, 'You have opened my eyes today. I have been saved from an abyss.'

\* \* \*

Man and woman are characterized by fear as long as both are subject to passions.

Draupadi showed as great a strength as Yudhishtira did.

Draupadi had five husbands at one time and yet has been called 'chaste'. This is because in that age, just as a man could marry several wives, a woman (in certain regions) could marry several husbands. The code of marriage changes with time and place.

But from another point of view, Draupadi is a symbol of the mind. And the five Pandavas are the five senses brought under its control. And it is indeed desirable that they are so controlled. Since all the five senses were under the control of the mind and had become refined, the mind (Draupadi) can be said to have wedded the five senses (Pandavas).

The strength which Draupadi showed was immense. Even Bhima and the Dharmaraja Yudhishtira were afraid of her.

While in jail, as I read the prayer of Draupadi to Krishna at this time, as given in the *Mahabharata*, I wept bitterly.

To my mind, this prayer of Draupadi has extraordinary strength in it. Countless men in North India recite these verses.

The power of words too increases or decreases in proportion to the penance underlying them. What is there in the word 'AUM'? It is simply made up of three syllables 'a', 'u' and 'm'. And yet its value lies in the penance associated with it. When there is greater penance behind the word, its value becomes greater. The same is the case with Draupadi. She may even be regarded as an imaginary character created by Vyasa. Such a woman may or may not have existed. But the great strength of Vyasa's penance and the recitation by crores of people of the prayers put into Draupadi's mouth by him have raised the value of that prayer.

'Govinda' means the master of the senses; by *gopis* are meant the thousands of sense-organs. *Gopijanapriya* means one who is the beloved of the masses or, say, of the weak. Draupadi was surrounded by the Kauravas. The Kauravas are our evil desires. Draupadi cries, 'O Keshava, how is it that you do not know me?' It is the cry of the distressed, the voice of the aggrieved. Do not we all have evil desires? When are we free from passions? Draupadi says that she has been surrounded

by Kauravas. Here 'Kauravas' may also mean wicked persons. But we are overpowered even more by our evil desires than by wicked persons. So it is better to interpret 'Kauravas' to mean evil desires.

Draupadi is a servant of God and as such she has the right even to quarrel with Him. She cries, 'Oh Master, Oh Lord, Oh Ramanath, i.e., Lakshmiapati, i.e., Lord of the World, He who gives salvation, He who brings about self-realization, Vrajnath, i.e., Lord of the universe, Artinashana, i.e., Dispeller of grief, I am drowning in a sea of Kauravas, i.e., I am sinking in a multitude of desires; I am full of wicked passions. Save me.'

Draupadi repeats the call 'Krishna, Krishna'. When a person is either in great joy or in great misery, he calls out to God twice. Draupadi says, 'I come to you for refuge; save me; I am beset with evil passions, and have become weak; my limbs are giving way. Save me.'

In Bombay there is a woman named Janakibai. In 1915 when I was staying with Revashankarbhai she came to see me. She boasted a great deal about herself. At that time I did not believe her. Then when I went to Dwarka, she also was there. I made particular inquiries in regard to her and found that she moved quite freely among the most wicked of men. Her idea was that she should be able to preserve her chastity even while living in the midst of the worst men. It so happens that no one even in anger addresses her with a disrespectful 'thou'. She moves amongst them like a lioness.

\* \* \*

We are helpless like Draupadi, because we are all full of impurities and evil desires. Our fear of serpents and such like is a proof of our weakness. I am regarded as the highest in the Ashram; even then I, too, feel afraid. It means that I also am more helpless than Draupadi.

Dwarka means the whole world, or we ourselves, not the dirty little town near Porbandar in Kathiawar.

\* \* \*

What can women have done that even men like Tulsidas have used insulting epithets for them? Whether it was the

fault of Tulsidas or of the times, the blemish is nevertheless there.

The ancient laws were made by seers who were men. The women's experience, therefore, is not represented in them. Strictly speaking, as between man and woman, neither should be regarded as superior or inferior. The place and functions of both are different, and God has defined both.

\* \* \*

Only the self can raise the self; the self is the help of the self. Only women can raise women. This requires *tapascharya* and hard work. It is true that women are more capable of it than men; but the *tapascharya* must be intelligent. Today women merely toil on in a helpless condition like drudges.

It may be agreed that no one can save woman except herself. But it may be asked, 'Can she be self-supporting?' My heart says that she can. If she learns *satyagraha*, she can be perfectly independent and self-supporting. She will not have to feel dependent upon anyone. This does not mean that she shall not take any help from others. She will certainly. But if such help be not forthcoming she will not feel destitute. If we are detached, even while we use the articles which we receive, we are self-dependent. In such a state, even though receiving help from all the world we in fact never become dependent on anyone. And if help were refused, we would say, it was good that it was not given, and would not get angry, nor blame anyone. This is called *satyagraha*. It is not enough merely to be convinced that we should be fearless. We should become fearless at heart. Casting off fear does not mean that we should not care for the world's opinion.

One should give up the idea that one is helpless. God is the help of all. It is possible to throw the blame for the present sorry condition of women on their husbands. But women should think how best they can themselves cast off their own weakness.

\* \* \*

There can be only one prayer for us all. If we offer this prayer daily, understanding it properly, it will get embedded in our minds. Keshava (God) is always with us. He is not in

some Dwarka. That is only the language of the poet. Draupadi forgot that Keshava was with her. He clothed her body again and again remaining beside her. Whenever evil thoughts or evil desires spring in our mind, we should say to ourselves: oh, why do such thoughts come to me? We should then think of these verses of prayer.

\* \* \*

This<sup>1</sup> is not a mere political book. I have used the language of politics, but I have really tried to offer a glimpse of *dharma*. What is the meaning of '*Hind Swaraj*'? It means rule of *dharma* or *Ramarajya*. I have addressed as many meetings of women as of men. At women's meetings I have always used the word *Ramarajya* in place of *swaraj*.

This book is the gist of my thinking for several years. Just as one cannot help speaking out when one's heart is full, so also I have been unable to restrain myself from writing the book since my heart was full. The book is meant mainly for the illiterate masses.

\* \* \*

Whatever character we have inherited from our parents is our real inheritance. It may be said to be our spiritual inheritance, and it is our duty to add to it. If a father leaves an inheritance of a *lac* of rupees and the son increases it to a million and then says, 'What kind of man my father was who collected only a *lac* and how clever I am that I amassed a million', he is a wicked son; there is pride in what he says. We do not wish to add to money inherited from our parents, but to character, to our spiritual inheritance, and we should not feel proud about it, for spiritual inheritance is not possible without humility.

\* \* \*

In abstaining from a thing we have not been used to from birth—for example, meat-eating—we make no sacrifice. Such a thing is quite natural for us, and we perform no heroic act thereby.

\* \* \*

Man's beauty is in his character, that of a beast in its body. In the case of a cow, for instance, we may say how good it is because of its skin, or hair, or feet, or horns; in the case of a man, on the other hand, we do not say that he is good because he is five feet and a half, or bad because he is four feet and a half, or better if he is an inch more than five feet and a half. Being good or bad in the case of man lies in his heart, not in his body or even in his accumulated wealth. Here in the Ashram, we have regarded it our *dharm* to build up the virtues of the heart. We eat and drink, and construct buildings with sand and mortar. That is because we have to do these things. We have not despised mud huts, we would not be ashamed to live in one but we should indeed feel ashamed to live in luxury. We should hang our heads in shame if we add to our wealth. Indeed, we may possess wealth for service; we have to accumulate such wealth, much against our will. But some people accumulate wealth regarding greed as their religion. This is not proper. In proportion as we make our outer life more and more elaborate, we harm our moral progress, and we injure our *dharm*

\* \* \*

Our merchants earn crores of rupees in the markets of Bombay. That is no cause for delight to us. It is rather a matter for regret. Because when a Bombay merchant earns five crores by way of brokerage, the Britisher gets ninety-five crores and that too he takes away from the country through bleeding the poor man white. We do not realize this, because after all it takes time to bleed a nation of thirty-three crores of people.

\* \* \*

If a labourer does all his work dedicating it to God, then thereby he can attain self-realization. Self-realization means purity of self. Strictly speaking, only those who do bodily labour get self-realization; because 'God is the strength of the weak'. By 'weak' is not meant 'weak in body', though for them also their strength is God but we should take it to mean weak in means and materials. The labourer must cultivate humility, for mere developing of intelligence may lead to the development of an *asuri* intelligence. By doing merely in-



tellectual work, we develop *asuri* tendencies. It is, therefore, that the *Gita* says that one who eats without labour eats stolen food. Humility is inherent in labour. And that is why it is *karmayoga* or activity that leads to salvation. Doing physical work simply for wages is no *karmayoga*, since the idea is simply to earn money. Cleaning of latrines for earning money is no *yajna* (sacrifice). But the same work if done by way of service, for the sake of sanitation and for the good of others, becomes *yajna*. One who does bodily labour out of a spirit of service, in all humility and for self-realization, gets self-realization. Such a one should never feel reluctant to work. He should be ever awake.

\* \* \*

How can the pot call the kettle black when both are of practically the same colour? In the same way what can man say to woman or how can he criticize her? If numerous suspicions, doubts, passions and fears characterize women, they exist also in men. Some pundits say that woman cannot attain salvation. But as I see it, that is not so. The *Vaishnavas* believe that there has not been a greater devotee than Mirabai. My view is that if Mirabai cannot get salvation, no man can ever get it.

\* \* \*

The farmer sleeps in the field. Are you or the British officer ever likely to sleep there? But who cares for the poor man's feelings? What joy does he get out of life? He has to work in the field from early morning. So he also spreads his bed there. He may die of snake-bite. But the farmer leads such a life by compulsion. If it is at all called sacrifice on his part, it is sacrifice forced on him. It is not as though he refused to travel by train; if someone provided him the opportunity, he would travel. But if he leads his particular kind of life in full knowledge of it, his life would indeed be blessed. Some sages lead a life like this farmer, or like Jada Bharat. But in their case they have taken to such life purposely.

\* \* \*

I would certainly worship an idol made of clay, if thereby my mind becomes lighter. If my life becomes fruitful, then

only the worship of young Krishna's idol has meaning. The stone is no God; but God resides in the stone. If I besmear the idol with sandal paste, make an offering of rice, and pray to it for strength to cut off so many heads, one of you should throw the idol into a well, or break it into pieces.

\* \* \*

If we wish to develop in us the capacity to look on all with an equal eye, we should aim at getting only what the rest of the world gets. Thus if the whole world gets milk, we may also have it. We may pray to God and say, 'O God, if you wish me to have milk, give it first to the rest of the world.' But who can pray thus? Only he who has so much sympathy for others and who labours for their good. Even if we cannot practise this principle, we must at least understand and appreciate it. For the present, our only prayer to God should be that since we are fallen so low He may accept whatever little we do. We may not progress in this direction but He should give us strength to lessen our *parigraha*. If we repent of our sins, they will not increase further. We should not keep anything with us thinking it belongs to us, but should strive to give up as much of our *parigraha* as we can.

\* \* \*

If man needs the help of the whole world before he can follow truth and non-violence, then he would indeed become dependent. But God has arranged things so beautifully, that even if the whole world is against him, he can still follow truth and non-violence himself. If we do not wish to quarrel, the other person can certainly not quarrel with us. In the end he will get tired and will be quiet. On the other hand, if we become angry, we increase anger. It is like adding fuel to the fire.

\* \* \*

How can he rise, in whose mind there is never any problem?

\* \* \*

From the fact that ... committed suicide, we should learn that we should not allow sorrow or troubles to prey constantly upon our minds. We should not brood over them. If we have

felt hurt by someone, we should tell him so straightway. Then the pain will not remain in our hearts. Even brooding sorrowfully within oneself is a kind of suicide.

Self-condemnation is desirable to some degree. In a way it is good to remain dissatisfied with oneself. If a man's dissatisfaction is within limits he will rise. But if he always needlessly goes on finding fault with himself and says he has not been able to do this or that, then he will really not be able to do anything and will become a fool. We should at the same time be contented and discontented. Then only can we rise.

The body is sometimes called a *ramachintamani*. If we remain devoted to God, it would really prove to be so. But to become wholly devoted to God, we have to control the body.

Man has to move about out of doors. His work is outside the house. So he does not quickly become despondent. But woman has to stay all the time inside the house. So she is lonely and falls an easy prey to despondency. If she finds another woman to talk to, she becomes so talkative that she fails to discriminate between what she should say and what she should not. Being always in the house she develops such defects. Of course, in a sense such loneliness is desirable. It saves her from many temptations. But it is fruitful only if we learn to turn our eyes inward, search our hearts, and become introspective

\* \* \*

Suppose there is a woman who is entirely illiterate yet remains devoted to her duties. She does not touch even a blade of grass that does not belong to her. She does not steal even in her dreams. If you ask her what the *Bhagavata* is, she stares you in the face. But she loves every human being as though she were the mother of all mankind.

Suppose there is another woman, who knows everything, has all the Upanishads by heart, whose pronunciation is excellent, but who steals, lies, is clever in making others work for her and is adept in almost everything. There is not the slightest doubt that the former is superior to the latter. Of course, if she learns reading and writing, she would be better still.

\* \* \*

Of what use is knowledge in which there is no humility or tenderness? Sage Kaushika became angry when a bird eased itself over him. The bird was consumed to ashes by his anger. The sage felt somewhat proud at the power of his penance. He then went to a house as a guest. The lady of the house was busy serving her husband, and so kept the visitor waiting. After she had finished her work she went to the sage with some food for him and stating the cause of her delay apologized to him. The sage got angry. The lady said, 'I am not a bird that you can burn me with an angry look besides, such anger cannot be called wisdom.' The sage learnt a lesson and said, 'You have given me two kinds of food—food to eat and the food of wisdom.'

\* \* \*

A man who does the work that falls to his lot in the natural course of things can remain unattached to it. He does not get false attachment for such work.

Real knowledge and true education can be had by devoted performance of one's duty.

It is disgusting to see people that throng the hospitals. Doctors treat them—but it is also their duty to teach them how to remain healthy. But hardly any doctor does this. Most doctors pamper the body. By doing this they harm man's character and degrade his soul. Besides, by pampering the body they do not really save it.

To kill living animals for medicinal purposes to learn suturing, is this the work of a human being? It is the work of the devil.

\* \* \*

Passion is common both to man and woman. The mind of a passionate person always wanders about seeking objects of pleasure. We must understand that our life is not for enjoying or giving such pleasures, but for self-realization.

The marriage of Siva and Parvati is regarded as an ideal marriage. One who wants to wed like Parvati should think of a man like Siva who is free from all passions. It is not Parvati alone that was destined to get such a husband. Every woman holds that fate in her own hands.

In choosing a husband, one must not go by the kind of clothes he puts on, or the turban he wears. One must see how educated he is, and how good he is in character. Once you have decided to marry, marry one who has good character, and whose mind is compatible with yours. If you find such a person, well and good; otherwise resolve to remain unmarried. One should not think of marrying anyone that comes along. Parvati had resolved that she would marry only one who was free from all passions like Siva, otherwise she would remain unmarried. Every girl should cherish the ideal of Parvati.

\* \* \*

Not to ride on another's back is also service. Not to accept service from another and to develop an attitude of not making others work for one is also a service.

\* \* \*

The world is such that if we put three stitches at one place thirteen others give way elsewhere. Then how can we improve it? Real progress consists in recognizing Truth which exists within us as our Soul.

If you are good, the world is good. Bhagawan Patanjali has written that the desire for revenge disappears in the presence of non-violence. If we are ourselves slaves we regard all others also as slaves. In short, who wants to cheat an innocent man? One who tries to play false with such a person will ultimately only hurt himself. If we do not retaliate, if we do not oppose the misdeeds of a wicked person his misdeeds themselves will bring about his downfall. He will fall and then correct himself.

\* \* \*

If we achieve *swaraj* in our own Ashram we would obtain *swaraj* for the whole of India. It means we would all be straight like a stick. None of us would look upon another with suspicion. If we have no mutual distrust *swaraj* is at hand.

*Swaraj* means rule over one's own self, not over another. It means controlling one's self. He who has gained control over his sense organs has obtained almost everything.

He who believes in punishment and violence has necessarily

to resort to deceit. Deceit is a necessary accompaniment of such belief.

\* \* \*

Our temple is in our Ashram, nay, it is in our hearts. A temple constructed of a few stones has no meaning. Only a temple raised in our hearts is useful.

If our Ashram goes on well like this and does not produce any bad people, it will become a place for pilgrimage.

\* \* \*

Every pebble on the bank of the Narmada is said to be Siva. By the Narmada we do not mean only the river near Broach, but all rivers. If we wash clean a pebble on the bank of a river and offer *bilva patra*<sup>2</sup> to it, the pebble becomes Siva for us. Going a step further, if we take a lump of earth and mould it into the shape of a Siva *linga* it also becomes Siva for us. On going still further, we may think that Siva resides in the hearts of us all.

We are idolators as well as iconoclasts. We destroy the stone in the idol, but we worship the image of God in it.

I expect all the women in the Ashram not to do a single piece of work without giving it proper thought. To this end, women should acquire knowledge. At present, the women of India have become dull and lifeless.

\* \* \*

A girl who wishes to remain unmarried should be wedded to independence. A girl dependent upon others can never remain unmarried.

If the ghost dies, the spirit will rise. If we rob someone, someone else is ready to rob us. There is a proverb in Gujarati which says that there is always something mightier than a lion to subdue a lion.

\* \* \*

Just as when we do not know cooking, and yet prepare half-cooked things and eat them we get indigestion, in the same way if we cannot understand what we read and yet go on reading, we shall get literary indigestion.

\* \* \*

Even the greatest are punished if they do things they ought not to do.

\*            \*            \*

Devotees of God carry on activities dictated by their inner voice. But this inner voice also may sometimes deceive. So devotees must always remain vigilant.

\*            \*            \*

A person who tells a half-lie tells one lie and a half, because he deceives also his own mind; whereas a person who tells an absolute lie knows that he is telling one

\*            \*            \*

Education of children mainly depends on mothers. Howsoever I may try to educate children in the Ashram, my efforts would prove futile without the co-operation of mothers. We have to educate our children to be helpful to others.

Even when a child goes to a teacher for studying, he takes with him a string attached to his mother's heart. He is always thinking when he can return to his mother. The mother draws the child to herself by means of this string.

We may read the *Gita*, or the *Ramayana* or the *Hind Su araj*. But what we have to learn from them is desire for the welfare of others. We have to teach this to our children also.

\*            \*            \*

Those forefathers of ours who gave up liquor did a manly thing. But for us who have never drunk liquor, there is only negative kind of merit in not drinking. We simply do not incur the sin of drinking—that is all. We may be said to have really given up drinking only when we understand all the evils that result from drinking.

In the same way, there is no meaning in our observing sacred days and vows without understanding their significance. Such observance becomes useful both to us and to society if we understand and can explain to others their significance. Our women observe Nagapanchami, Janmashtami and other holy days. But they should understand their significance. It is possible that the meaning of Nagapanchami is

that considering the serpent as a symbol of the enemy, it was sought through this means to inculcate the principle of not killing even one's enemies. In this world, excepting perhaps man, there is no other creature so poisonous as a serpent. If we regard anyone as so full of venom as a serpent, we should learn to love him, as though he were full of nectar. From doing this, we shall learn that every human being is worthy of worship, i.e., of service.

\* \* \*

This world is held together by bonds of love. History does not record the day-to-day incidents of love and service. It only records incidents of conflict and wars. Actually, however, acts of love and service are much more common in this world than conflicts and quarrels. We see innumerable villages and towns flourishing in the world. If the world were always full of discord, they could not possibly exist.

\* \* \*

We must necessarily abolish those laws that destroy *dharma*. Not only should we not abide by such laws, but we should even actively resist them. Now there are two ways of doing this—either through violence or through *satyagraha*. We should follow only the path of *satyagraha*. We cannot commit violence in the name of *dharma*. We may allow ourselves to be hanged or to be killed rather than kill others in the name of *dharma*.

\* \* \*

It is often asked how women may protect their honour. It is even suggested that they should carry daggers on them. If they do carry daggers, the daggers could of course be used against their own persons. One has to be very tough to be able to wield a dagger. One would have to change one's whole mode of life, for a person who has never seen blood drawn, or drawn blood himself, can never use a dagger. In order to be able to use a dagger, we shall have to take to hunting, kill quantities of sheep—so hard shall we have to make our hearts before we can thrust a dagger into someone.

So instead of teaching women to use a dagger, it is better to teach them to be fearless. God's protecting hand is always



over us. If we really believe in the existence of God, whom shall we fear? Even if the most wicked of persons assaults you, recite *Ramanama*. Most wicked persons would run away at this earnest cry to God. But if that does not happen, what does it matter? We should learn to die on such an occasion. If a child is on its death-bed, do we not almost kill ourselves in looking after it? If even after the mother's greatest efforts, the child dies in her lap, she has the satisfaction that she did her best for it. It is our duty to be ever prepared thus to lay down our life. However wicked the man, if we die rather than yield to his physical strength, what after all can he do to us? It is possible that a wicked man may give up his wickedness when faced with a pure-minded person, who is quite prepared to die. Thus *satyagraha* is twice blessed. It blesses him who offers it and also him against whom it is offered.

'Talks to Ashram Women' (G)

*Bapuna Patro* Ashrami Behnane, pp. 77-97

<sup>1</sup> *Hind Swaraj*

<sup>2</sup> The leaf of a tree regarded as sacred by Hindus

## 178. WOMAN AS INCARNATION OF AHIMSA

Segaon,

February 12, 1940

With certain omissions I quote below the following from a highly educated sister:

You have shown the world, through *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*, the dignity of the soul. . . But just as there is need for *ahimsa* and *brahmacharya* for a man to get rid of his aggressive spirit, lust . . . etc., there is for woman need of certain principles that would enable her to get rid of her baser qualities, which are different from men's and commonly said to belong by nature to her. The natural qualities of her sex, the upbringing meted out to her because of her sex, and her environment which is created because of her sex, all are against her. And in her work these things, namely, her nature, upbringing and surroundings always get in the way and hinder her and give occasion for the hackneyed phrase, 'She is only a woman, after all'. . . . I think

that, if we only possess the correct solution, the correct method of improving ourselves, we could make our natural qualities, such as sympathy and tenderness, a help instead of a hindrance. The improvement, just as your solution in the case of men and children, must come from within us.

Your advice to me was to read *Haryan*. I do so eagerly. But so far I have not come across, well, the advice for the inner spirit. Spinning and fighting for the national freedom are only some aspects of the training. They do not seem to contain the whole solution. For I have seen women who do spin and do try to work out the Congress ideals and still commit blunders which are attributed to the fact of their being women.

Tell us, please, how to make the best use of our qualities, how to turn our disadvantages into advantages.

I had flattered myself that my contribution to the woman's cause definitely began with the discovery of *satyagraha*. But the writer of the letter is of opinion that the fair sex requires treatment different from men. If it is so, I do not think any man will find the correct solution. No matter how much he tries, he must fail because nature has made him different from woman. Only the toad under the harrow knows where it pinches him. Therefore ultimately woman will have to determine with authority what she needs. My own opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help.

But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages past, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him. But the seers among men have recognized her equal status.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that at some point there is bifurcation. Whilst both are fundamentally one, it is also equally true that in the form there is a vital difference between the two. Hence the vocations of the two must also be different. The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress

of the house. He is the bread-winner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the caretaker in every sense of the term. The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative. Without her care the race must become extinct.

In my opinion it is degrading both for man and woman that women should be called upon or induced to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. It is a reversion to barbarity and the beginning of the end. In trying to ride the horse that man rides, she brings herself and him down. The sin will be on man's head for tempting or compelling his companion to desert her special calling. There is as much bravery in keeping one's home in good order and condition as there is in defending it against attack from without.

As I have watched millions of peasants in their natural surroundings and as I watch them daily in little Segaoon, the natural division of spheres of work has forced itself on my attention. There are no women blacksmiths and carpenters. But men and women work on the fields, the heaviest work being done by the males. The women keep and manage the homes. They supplement the meagre resources of the family, but man remains the main bread-winner.

The division of the spheres of work being recognized, the general qualities and culture required are practically the same for both the sexes.

My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and *ahimsa* in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex. If she is able to do this successfully, she must resolutely refuse to believe in the modern teaching that everything is determined and regulated by the sex impulse. I fear I have put the proposition rather clumsily. But I hope my meaning is clear. I do not know that the millions of men who are taking an active part in the war are obsessed by the sex spectre. Nor are the peasants working together in their fields worried or dominated by it. This is not to say or suggest that they are free from the instinct implanted in man and woman. But it most certainly does not dominate their lives as it seems to

dominate the lives of those who are saturated with the modern sex literature. Neither man nor woman has time for such things when he or she is faced with the hard fact of living life in its grim reality.

I have suggested in these columns that woman is the incarnation of *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation. Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. She can become the leader in *satyagraha* which does not require the learning that books give but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith.

My good nurse in the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, as I was lying on a sick bed years ago,<sup>1</sup> told me the story of a woman who refused to take chloroform because she would not risk the life of the babe she was carrying. She had to undergo a painful operation. The only anaesthetic she had was her love for the babe, to save whom no suffering was too great. Let not women, who can count many such heroines among them, ever despise their sex or deplore that they were not born men. The contemplation of that heroine often makes me envy woman the status that is hers, if she only knew. There is as much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do otherwise. But the wish is fruitless. Let us be happy in the state to which we are born and do the duty for which nature has destined us.

'What Is Woman's Role.'

*Harijan*, 24 Feb. 1940

<sup>1</sup> In January 1924

179. WOMEN OF THE WORLD MUST UNITE

New Delhi,  
July 18, 1947

If only the women of the world would come together they could display such heroic non-violence as to kick away the atom bomb like a mere ball. Women have been so gifted by God. If an ancestral treasure lying buried in a corner of the house unknown to the members of the family were suddenly discovered, what a celebration it would occasion. Similarly, women's marvellous power is lying dormant. If the women of Asia wake up, they will dazzle the world. My experiment in non-violence would be instantly successful if I could secure women's help.

Message to Chinese Women (G.)  
*Bihar Pachhi Dilli*, p 354

## V

# *Sarvodaya*—Non-Violent Social Transformation

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### § 1. Unto This Last

180 *SARVODAYA*<sup>1</sup> [UNTO THIS LAST]

#### PREFACE

People in the West generally hold that it is man's duty to promote the happiness—prosperity, that is, of the greatest number.<sup>2</sup> Happiness is taken to mean material happiness exclusively, that is, economic prosperity. If, in the pursuit of this happiness, moral laws are violated, it does not matter much. Again, as the object is the happiness of the greatest number, people in the West do not believe it to be wrong if it is secured at the cost of the minority. The consequences of this attitude are in evidence in all western countries.

The exclusive quest for the physical and material happiness of the majority has no sanction in divine law. In fact, some thoughtful persons in the West have pointed out that it is contrary to divine law to pursue happiness in violation of moral principles. The late John Ruskin<sup>3</sup> was foremost among these. He was an Englishman of great learning. He has written numerous books on art and crafts. He has also written a great deal on ethical questions. One of these books, a small one, Ruskin himself believed to be his best. It is read widely wherever English is spoken. In the book, he has effectively countered these arguments and shown that the well-being of the people at large consists in conforming to the moral law.

We in India are much given nowadays to imitation of the West. We do grant that it is necessary to imitate the West in certain respects. At the same time there is no doubt that many

western ideas are wrong. It will be admitted on all hands that what is bad must be eschewed. The condition of Indians in South Africa is pitiable. We go out to distant lands to make money. We are so taken up with this that we become oblivious of morality and of God. We become engrossed in the pursuit of self-interest. In the sequel, we find that going abroad does us more harm than good, or does not profit us as much as it ought to. All religions presuppose the moral law, but even if we disregard religion as such, its observance is necessary on grounds of common sense also. Our happiness consists in observing it. This is what John Ruskin has established. He has opened the eyes of the western people to this, and today, we see a large number of Europeans modelling their conduct on his teaching. In order that Indians may profit by his ideas, we have decided to present extracts from his book, in a manner intelligible to Indians who do not know English.

Socrates gave us some idea of man's duty. He practised his precepts. It can be argued that Ruskin's ideas are an elaboration of Socrates'. Ruskin has described vividly how one who wants to live by Socrates' ideas should acquit himself in the different vocations. The summary of his work which we offer here is not really a translation. If we translated it, the common reader might be unable to follow some of the Biblical allusions, etc. We present therefore only the substance of Ruskin's work. We do not even explain what the title of the book means, for it can be understood only by a person who has read the Bible in English.<sup>4</sup> But since the object which the book works towards is the welfare of all—that is, the advancement of all and not merely of the greatest number—we have entitled these articles '*Sarvodaya*'.

#### ROOTS OF TRUTH

Man suffers from many delusions; but none so great as his attempt to formulate laws for the conduct of other men disregarding the effects of social affection, as if they were only machines at work. That we cherish such an illusion does us no credit. Like other forms of error, the laws of political economy also contain an element of plausibility. Political economists assert that social affections are to be looked upon as accidental and disturbing elements in human nature; but

avarice and the desire for progress are constant elements. Let us eliminate the inconstants and, considering man merely as a money-making machine, examine by what laws of labour, purchase and sale, the greatest amount of wealth can be accumulated. Those laws once determined, it will be for each individual afterwards to introduce as much of the disturbing affectional elements as he chooses.

This would be a convincing argument if the social affections were of the same nature as the laws of demand and supply. Man's affections constitute an inner force. The laws of demand and supply are formulations concerning the external world. The two, therefore, are not of the same nature. If a moving body is acted upon by a constant force from one direction and a varying force from another, we would first measure the constant force and then the inconstant. We will be able to determine the velocity of the body by comparing the two forces. We can do this because the constant and the inconstant forces are of the same kind. But in social dealings the constant force of the laws of demand and supply and the accidental force of social affection are forces that differ in kind. Affection has a different kind of effect on man and acts in a different manner. It changes man's nature, so that we cannot measure its effect with the help of laws of addition and subtraction, as we can the effects of different forces on the velocity of a body. A knowledge of the laws of exchange is of no help in determining the effects of man's social affections.

I do not doubt the conclusions of the science of economics if its premises are accepted. If a gymnast formulated laws on the assumption that man is made only of flesh without a skeleton, those laws might well be valid, but they would not apply to man, since man has a skeleton. In the same way, the laws of political economy may be valid but they cannot apply to man, who is subject to affections. A physical-culture expert may suggest that man's flesh be detached from the skeleton, rolled into pellets, and then drawn out into cables. He may then say that the re-insertion of the skeleton will cause little inconvenience. We should describe such a man as a madcap, for the laws of physical culture cannot be based on the separation of the skeleton from the flesh. In the same manner, the laws



of political economy, which exclude human affections are of no use to man. And yet the political economists of today behave exactly like the gymnastic instructor. According to their mode of reasoning, man is a mere body—a machine—and they base their laws on this assumption. Though aware that man has a soul, they do not take it into account. How can such a science apply to man, in whom the soul is the predominant element?

Every time there is a strike, we have a clean proof that economics is not a science, that it is worse than useless. In such situations, the employers take one view of the matter, the workers another. Here we cannot apply the laws of supply and demand. Men rack their brains to prove that the interests of the employers and the employees are identical. These men know nothing of such matters. In fact, it does not always follow that because their worldly interests—economic interests—are at variance men must be antagonistic to each other. Let us suppose that the members of a family are starving. The family consists of a mother and her children. They have only one crust of bread between them. All of them are hungry. Here, the interests of the two—of the mother on the one hand, and the children on the other—are mutually opposed. If the mother eats, the children will starve; if the children are fed, the mother will go hungry. There is no hostility between the mother and the children for that reason; they are not antagonistic to one another. Though the mother is the stronger, she does not eat up the bread. The same is true of men's relations with one another.

Let us suppose that there is no difference between men and animals, and that we must fight like animals in pursuit of our respective interests. Even so we can lay down no general rule either way on whether or not the employer and the employee will always remain hostile to each other. Their attitudes change with circumstances. For instance, it is in the interest of both that work should be well and properly done and a just price obtained for it. But in the division of profits, the gain of the one may or may not be the loss of the other. It does not serve the employer's interests to pay wages so low as to leave his men sickly and depressed. Nor does it serve the worker's interests to demand a high wage irrespective of whether the

factory pays its way or not. If the owner does not have enough money to keep the engine-wheels in repair, it will obviously be wrong for the worker to demand full wages or to demand any wages at all.

We can thus see that we are not likely to succeed in constructing a science on the basis of the principle of supply and demand. It was never God's intention that the affairs of men should be conducted on the principle of profit and loss. Justice must provide the basis. Man must give up, therefore, all thought of advancing his interests by following expediency regardless of moral considerations. It is not always possible to predict with certainty the outcome of a given line of conduct. But in most cases we can determine whether a certain act is just or unjust. We can also assert that the result of moral conduct is bound to be good. We cannot predict what that result will be, or how it will come about.

Justice includes affection. The relation between master and operative depends on this element of affection. Let us assume that the master wants to exact the utmost amount of work from his servant. He allows him no time for rest, pays him a low wage, and lodges him in a garret. In brief, he pays him a bare subsistence wage. It may be argued that there is no injustice in all this. The servant has placed all his time at the master's disposal in return for a given wage, and the latter avails himself of it. He determines the limits of hardship in exacting work by reference to what others do. If the servant can get a better place, he is free to take it. This is called economics by those who formulate the laws of supply and demand. They assert that it is profitable to the master thus to exact the maximum amount of work for the minimum wage. In the long run, the entire society will benefit by it and, through the society, the servant himself.

But on reflection we find that this is not quite true. This method of calculation would have been valid if the employer were a mere machine which required some kind of force to drive it. But in this case the motive power of the servant is his soul, and soul-force contradicts and falsifies all the calculations of the economists. The machine that is man cannot be driven by the money-fuel to do the maximum amount of work. Man will give of his best only when his affections are brought into

play. The master-servant nexus must not be a pecuniary one, but one of love.

It usually happens that, if the master is a man of sense and energy, the servant works hard enough, under pressure; it also happens that, if the master is indolent and weak, the performance of the servant is not of the best in quality or quantity. But the true law is that, if we compare two masters of equal intelligence, the servant of the one who is sympathetically inclined will work better than that of the other who is not so inclined.

It may be argued that this principle does not quite hold, since kindness and indulgence are sometimes rewarded with their opposites. The servant becomes unmanageable. But the argument is nevertheless invalid. A servant who rewards kindness with negligence will become vengeful when treated harshly. A servant who is dishonest to a liberal master will be injurious to an unjust one.

Therefore, in any case and with any person, this unselfish treatment will yield the most effective return. We are here considering affections only as a motive power. That we should be kind because kindness is good is quite another consideration. We are not thinking of that for the present. We only want to point out here that not only are the ordinary laws of economics, which we considered above, rendered nugatory by the motive power of kindness—sympathy—but also that affection, being a power of an altogether different kind, is inconsonant with the laws of economics and can survive only if those laws are ignored. If the master is a calculating person who shows kindness only in expectation of a return, he will probably be disappointed. Kindness should be exercised for the sake of kindness, the reward will then come unsought. It is said that he who loses his life shall find it, and he who finds it shall lose it.<sup>5</sup>

Let us take the example of a regiment and its commander. If a general seeks to get his troops to work in accordance with the principles of economics, he will fail. There are many instances of generals cultivating direct, personal relations with their men, treating them with kindness, sharing their joys and hardships, ensuring their safety—in brief, treating them with sympathy. A general of this kind will be able to exact the most

arduous work from his troops. If we look into history, we shall rarely find a battle won where the troops had no love for their general. Thus the bond of sympathy between the general and his troops is the truest force. Even a band of robbers has the utmost affection for its leader. And yet we find no such intimate relation between the employer and the employees in textile mills and other factories. One reason for this is that, in these factories, the wages of the employees are determined by the laws of supply and demand. Between the employer and the employee there obtains, therefore, the relation of disaffection rather than of affection, and instead of sympathy between them we find antagonism. We have then to consider two questions: one, how far the rate of wages may be so regulated as not to vary with the demand for labour, second, how far workmen can be maintained in factories, without any change in their numbers irrespective of the state of trade, with the same bond [between workmen and employer] as obtains between servants and master in an old family, or between soldiers and their commander.

Let us consider the first question. It is surprising why economists do nothing to make it possible for standards of payment for factory workers to be fixed. We see, on the other hand, that the office of the Prime Minister of England is not put up to auction, but that whoever the incumbent, the remuneration remains the same. Nor do we offer the job of a priest to anyone who agrees to accept the lowest salary. With physicians and lawyers, too, we do not generally deal in this manner. Thus we observe that in these instances a certain standard of payment is fixed. It may be asked, however, whether a good workman and a bad one must both be paid the same wage. In fact, that is as it should be. In the result, the rate of wages for all workers being the same, we shall engage only a good bricklayer or carpenter as we go only to a good physician or lawyer – the fees of all physicians or lawyers being the same. That is the proper reward of a good workman – to be chosen. Therefore, the right system respecting all labour is that it should be paid at fixed rates. Where a bad workman finds it possible to deceive employers by accepting a low wage, the eventual outcome cannot but be bad.

Let us now consider the second point. It is that, whatever

the state of trade, the factories must maintain the same number of workers in employment. When there is no security of employment, the workers are obliged to ask for higher wages. If, however, they can be assured of continued employment for life, they will be prepared to work for very low wages. It is clear, therefore, that the employer who assures security of employment to his workers will find it profitable in the long run. The employees also stand to gain if they continue steadily in the same job. Large profits are not possible in factories run on these lines. Big risks cannot be taken. Gambling on a large scale will not be possible. The soldier is ready to lay down his life for the sake of his commander. That is why the work of a soldier is considered more honourable than that of an ordinary worker. The soldier's trade is really not slaying, but being slain in defence of others. Anyone who enlists as a soldier holds his life at the service of the state. This is true also of the lawyer, the physician and the priest. That is why we look up to them with respect. A lawyer must do justice even at the cost of his life. The physician must treat his patients at the cost of inconvenience to himself. And the clergyman must instruct his congregation and direct it along the right path, regardless of consequences.

If this can happen in the professions mentioned, why not in trade and commerce? Why is it that trade is always associated with unscrupulousness? We shall see on reflection that it is always assumed that the merchant is moved solely by self-interest. Even though he has a socially useful function, we take it for granted that his object is to fill his own coffers. Even the laws are so drafted as to enable the merchant to amass wealth with the utmost speed. It is also accepted as a principle that the buyer must offer the lowest possible price and the seller must demand and accept the highest. The trader has thus been encouraged in this habit, yet the public themselves look down on him for his dishonesty. This principle must be abandoned. It is not right that the merchant should look only to self-interest and amass wealth. This is not trade, but robbery. The soldier lays down his life for the state and the trader ought to suffer a comparable loss, ought even to lose his life in the interests of society. In all states the soldier's profession is to defend the people; the pastor's to teach it; the

physician's to keep it in health; the lawyer's to enforce pure justice in it; and the merchant's to provide for it. And it is the duty of each on due occasion to die for the people. The soldier must be prepared to die at his post of duty rather than desert it. During a plague epidemic, the physician must not run away from his task but instead attend to the patients even at the risk of infection. The priest must lead people from error to truth even if they should kill him for it. The lawyer must ensure, even at the cost of his life, that justice prevails.<sup>6</sup>

We pointed out above the proper occasions for members of the professions to lay down their lives. What, then, is the proper occasion for the merchant to lay down his life? This is a question which all, the merchant included, must ask themselves. The man who does not know when to die does not know how to live. We have seen that the merchant's function is to provide for the people. Just as the clergyman's function is not to earn a stipend but to instruct, so the merchant's function is not to make profits but to provide for the people. The clergyman who devotes himself to preaching has his needs provided for, and in the same manner the merchant will have his profits. But neither of them must have an eye only on the main chance. Both have work to do — each a duty to perform — irrespective of whether or not they get the stipend or the profit. If this proposition is true, the merchant deserves the highest honour. For his duty is to procure commodities of high quality and distribute them at a price which people can afford. It also becomes his duty at the same time to ensure the safety and well-being of the hundreds or thousands of men working under him. This requires a great deal of patience, kindness and intelligence. Also, in discharging these several functions he is bound, as others are bound, to give up his life, if need be. Such a trader would not sell adulterated goods or cheat anyone, whatever his difficulties or even if he was going to be reduced to utter poverty. Moreover, he will treat the men under him with the utmost kindness. Very often a young man taking up a situation with a big factory or commercial house travels a long way from home, so that the master has to accept the role of his parents. If the master is indifferent, the young man will be like an orphan. At every step, therefore,

the merchant or the master must ask himself this question, 'Do I deal with my servants as I do with my sons?'

Suppose a ship's captain places his son among the common sailors under his command. The captain's duty is to treat all sailors as he would treat his son. In the same manner, a merchant may ask his son to work alongside of those under him. He must always treat the workers as he would then treat his son. This is the true meaning of economics. And as the captain is bound to be the last man to leave his ship in case of shipwreck, so in the event of famine or other calamities, the trader is bound to safeguard the interests of his men before his own. All this may sound strange. But the really strange thing about the modern age is that it should so sound. For anyone who applies his mind to it will be able to see that the true principle is as we have stated it. Any other standard is impossible for a progressive nation. If the British have survived so long, it is not because they have lived up to the maxims of economics, but because they have had many heroes who have questioned them and followed instead these principles of moral conduct. The harm that results from the violation of these principles and the nation's consequent decline from greatness, we shall consider on another occasion.

#### VEINS OF WEALTH

Economists may reply in the following manner to what we said earlier concerning 'root of truth': 'It is true that certain advantages flow from social affection. But economists do not take these advantages into their reckoning. The science with which they are concerned is the science of getting rich. Far from being fallacious, it has in experience been found to be effective. Those who follow it do become rich, and those who disregard it become poor. All the millionaires of Europe have acquired their wealth by following the laws of this science. It is futile to seek to controvert this. Every man of the world knows how money is made and how it is lost.'

This is not quite true. Men of business do indeed make money but they do not know whether they make it by fair means and if their money-making contributes to the national weal. Very often they do not even know the meaning of the word 'rich'. They do not realize that, if there are rich men,

there must also be poor men. People sometimes believe, mistakenly, that by following certain precepts it is possible for everybody to become rich. But the true position can be compared to a water-wheel where one bucket empties out as another fills. The power of the rupee you possess depends on another going without it. If no one wants it, it will be useless to you. The power it possesses depends on your neighbour's lack of it. There can be wealth only where there is scarcity. This means that, in order to be rich, one must keep another poor.

Political economy consists in the production, preservation and distribution, at the fittest time and place, of useful and pleasurable things. The farmer who reaps his harvest at the right time, the builder who lays bricks properly, the carpenter who attends to woodwork with care, the woman who runs her kitchen efficiently are all true political economists. All of them add to the national income. A science that teaches the opposite of this is not 'political'. Its only concern is with individuals merely accumulating a certain metal and putting it to profitable use by keeping others in want of it. Those who do this estimate their wealth—the value of their farms and cattle—by the number of rupees they can get for them, rather than the value of their rupees by the number of cattle and farms they can buy with them. Furthermore, men who thus accumulate metal rupees think in terms of the number of workmen whose services they can command. Let us suppose that a certain individual possesses gold, silver, corn, etc. This person will require a servant. And if none of his neighbours is in need of gold, silver or corn, he will find it difficult to get one. He will then have to bake his bread, make his clothes and plough his field all by himself. This man will find his gold to be of no greater value than the yellow pebbles on his estate. His hoard of corn will rot. For he cannot consume more than his neighbour. He must therefore maintain himself by hard labour as other men do. Most people will not want to accumulate gold or silver on these terms.

Careful reflection will show that what we really desire through acquisition of wealth is power over other men—power to acquire for our advantage the labour of a servant, a tradesman or an artisan. And the power we can thus acquire will



be in direct proportion to the poverty of others. If there is only one person in a position to employ a carpenter, the latter will accept whatever wage is offered. If there are three or four persons who need his services, he will work for the person who offers him the highest wage. So that growing rich means contriving that as large a number of men as possible shall have less than we have. Economists generally assume that it is of advantage to the nation as a whole if the mass of people are thus kept in want. Equality among men is certainly not possible. But conditions of scarcity, unjustly created, injure the nation. Scarcity and abundance arising naturally make, and keep, the nation happy.

Thus the circulation of wealth among a people resembles the circulation of blood in the body. When circulation of blood is rapid, it may indicate any of these things: robust health, effects of exercise, or a feeling of shame or fever. There is a flush of the body which is indicative of health, and another which is a sign of gangrene. Furthermore, the concentration of blood at one spot is harmful to the body and, similarly, concentration of wealth at one place proves to be the nation's undoing.

Let us suppose that two sailors are shipwrecked on an uninhabited coast. They are then obliged to produce food and other necessities of life through their own labour. If they both keep good health and work in amity, they may build a good house, till the land and lay by something for the future. All these things would constitute real wealth. If both of them work equally well, they will have equal shares. Therefore, all that economic science would have to say about their case is that they had acquired a right to an equal share in the fruits of their labour. Let us suppose now that after a while one of them feels discontented. So they divide the land and each one works on his land by himself and on his own account. Let us suppose that at a critical time one of them falls ill. He would then approach the other for help. The latter might reply: 'I shall do this work for you, but on condition that you do the same amount of work for me when required. You must undertake in writing to work on my field when required for the same number of hours that I work for you now.' Suppose further that the disabled man's illness continues and that every

time he has to give a written promise to the other, healthy person. What will be the position of the two men when the invalid recovers? They will both of them have been reduced to utter poverty. For, during the time that the invalid was laid up, his labour was unavailable. Even assuming that the friend was very hard-working, it is obvious that the time which he devoted to the ailing man's land was at the expense of work on his own. This means that the combined property of the two would be less than it would have been otherwise.

Also, the relation in which the two stood to each other has altered. The sick man becomes a debtor, and can only offer his labour as payment towards the debt. Suppose now that the healthy man decided to make use of the documents in his possession. He would then find it possible wholly to abstain from work—that is, be idle. If he chose, he could exact further pledges<sup>7</sup> from the man who has recovered. No one can attribute any illegality to such a transaction. If now a stranger were to arrive on the scene, he would find that one of the two men had become wealthy and the other had lost his well-being. He would also see one of them passing his days in idle luxury and the other in want, though labouring hard. The reader will note from this that claiming the fruits of another's labour as of right leads to a diminution of real wealth.

Let us consider another illustration. Suppose that three men established a kingdom and then they all lived separately. Each of them raised a different crop which the others could also avail themselves of. Suppose, further, that one of them, in order to save the time of all the three, gave up farming and undertook to arrange the transfer of commodities from one to the other, receiving in return a quantity of food-grains. If this man provided the required commodity<sup>8</sup> at the right time, all of them would prosper. Now suppose that he kept back some of the grain he was to transfer. Then suppose there set in a period of scarcity, and the middleman offered the stolen corn at an exorbitant price. In this way he could reduce both the farmers to poverty and employ them as labourers.

This would be a case of obvious injustice. This is, however, the way the merchants of today manage their affairs. We can also see that in consequence of this fraudulent practice the wealth of the three, taken collectively, will be less than it

would have been if the middleman had behaved honestly. The other two farmers have done less work than they could have. Because they could not obtain the supplies they wanted, their labour did not fructify to the fullest, and the stolen commodities<sup>9</sup> in the hands of the dishonest middleman were not put to the most effective use.

We can therefore reckon with mathematical accuracy how far the estimate of a nation's wealth depends on the manner in which that wealth has been acquired. We cannot estimate a nation's wealth on the basis of the quantity of cash it possesses. Cash in the hands of an individual may be a token of perseverance, skill and prosperity, or of harmful luxuries, merciless tyranny and chicanery. Our way of estimating wealth not only takes into account the moral attributes of the different modes of acquiring it but is also sound mathematically. One stock of money is such that it has created ten times as much in the gathering of it. Another is such that it has annihilated ten times as much in the gathering of it.

To lay down directions for the making of money without regard to moral considerations is therefore a pursuit that bespeaks of man's insolence. There is nothing more disgraceful to man than the principle 'buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest.' Buy in the cheapest market? Yes, but what made your market cheap? Charcoal may be cheap among roof timbers after a fire and the bricks of buildings brought down by an earthquake may be cheap. But no one, therefore, will make bold to assert that fire and earthquake redound to the nation's benefit. Again, sell in the dearest market? Yes, but what made your market dear? You made good profit today from the sale of your bread. But was it by extorting the last cowrie from a dying man? Or did you sell it to a rich man who will tomorrow appropriate all that you have? Or did you give it to a bandit on his way to pillaging your bank? Probably you will not be able to answer any of these questions, for you do not know. But there is one question you can answer, namely, whether you sold it justly and at a reasonable price. And justice is all that matters. It is your duty to act so that no one suffers through your actions.

We saw that the value of money consists in its power to command the labour of men. If that labour could be had

without payment, there should be no further need of money. Instances are known where human labour can be had without payment. We have considered examples which show that moral power is more effective than the power of money. We also saw that man's goodness can do what money cannot do. There exist men in many parts of England who cannot be beguiled with money.

Moreover, if we admit that wealth carries with it the power to direct labour, we shall also see that the more intelligent and moral men are, the greater is the wealth amassed. It may even appear on a fuller consideration that the persons themselves constitute the wealth, not gold and silver. We must search for wealth not in the bowels of the earth, but in the hearts of men. If this is correct, the true law of economics is that men must be maintained in the best possible health, both of body and mind, and in the highest state of honour. A time may also come when England, instead of adorning the turbans of its slaves with diamonds from Golkonda and thus sporting her wealth, may be able to point to her great men of virtue, saying, in the words of a truly eminent Greek, 'This is my wealth.'

#### EVEN-HANDED JUSTICE.<sup>10</sup>

Some centuries before Christ there lived a Jewish merchant, Solomon<sup>11</sup> by name. He had made a large fortune and earned great fame. His maxims are remembered in Europe even today. He was so beloved of the Venetians that they erected a statue in the city to his memory. Though his maxims are known by rote, very few persons actually practise them. He says: 'Those who make money through lies are afflicted with pride, and that is a sign of their death.' At another place, he adds: 'Treasures of wickedness profit nothing. It is truth which delivers from death.'<sup>12</sup> In both these maxims Solomon asserts that death is the outcome of wealth unjustly acquired. Nowadays, people tell lies or perpetrate injustice so cleverly that we cannot find them out. For there are misleading advertisements. Things bear attractive labels, and so on.

Again the wise man says: 'He that oppresseth the poor to multiply his riches shall surely come to want.' And he adds: 'Rob not the poor because he is poor. Oppress not the afflicted

in the place of business. 'For God will corrupt the soul of those that torment them.' At present, however, it is the practice in business to administer kicks to those who are already dead. We are eager to take advantage of a needy man. The high-wayman robs the rich, but the trader robs the poor.

Solomon says further: 'The rich and the poor are equal. God is their maker. God gives them knowledge.'<sup>13</sup> The rich and the poor cannot live, the one without the other. They always need each other. Neither of them can be regarded as superior or inferior to the other. But evil consequences follow when the two forget that they are equal, and that God of their light.

Wealth is like a river. A river always flows towards the sea, that is, down an incline. So, as a general rule must wealth go where it is needed. But the flow of wealth, like the course of a river, can be regulated. Most of the rivers run out their courses unregulated, their marshy banks poisoning the wind. If dams are built across these rivers to direct the water flow as required, they will irrigate the soil and keep the atmosphere pure. Similarly the uncontrolled use of wealth will multiply vices among men and cause starvation; in brief, such wealth will act like a poison. But the selfsame wealth, if its circulation is regulated and its use controlled, can, like a river whose stream has been properly harnessed, promote prosperity.

The principle of regulating the circulation of wealth is ignored altogether by economists. Theirs is merely the science of getting rich. But there are many different ways of getting rich. There was a time in Europe when people sought to acquire wealth by poisoning owners of large estates and appropriating their possessions. Nowadays, merchants adulterate the food sold to the poor, for example, milk with borax, wheat flour with potato flour, coffee with chicory, butter with fat and so on. This is on the same level as getting rich by poisoning others. Can we call this either an art or a science of getting rich?

Let us now, however, assume that by 'getting rich' economists merely mean 'getting rich by robbing others'. They should point out that theirs is a science of getting rich by legal or just means. It happens these days that many things which are legal are not just. The only right way, therefore, to acquire

wealth is to do so justly. And if this is true, we must know what is just. It is not enough to live by the laws of demand and supply. Fish, wolves and rats subsist in that manner. Bigger fish prey on smaller ones, rats swallow insects and wolves devour even human beings. That for them is the law of Nature; they know no better. But God has endowed man with understanding, with a sense of justice. He must follow these and not think of growing rich by devouring others - by cheating others and reducing them to beggary.

Let us examine what then the laws of justice regarding payment of labour are.

As we stated earlier, a just wage for a worker will be that which will secure him the same labour, when he needs it, as he has put in for us today. If we give him a lower wage, he will be underpaid, and if more, overpaid.

Suppose a man wants to engage a worker. Two persons offer their services. If the man who offers to accept a lower wage is engaged, he will be underpaid. If there is a large number of employers and only one worker, he will get his own terms and will very likely be overpaid. The just wage lies between these two points.

If someone lends me money which I have to repay after a time, I shall pay him interest. Similarly, if someone gives me his labour today, I must return him an identical quantity of labour and something more by way of interest. If someone gives me an hour of labour today, I should promise to give him an hour and five minutes or more. This is true of every kind of worker.

If, now, of two men who offer me their services, I engage the one who accepts the lower wage, the result will be that he will be half-starved while the other man will remain unemployed. Even otherwise, if I pay full wages to the workman whom I employ, the other man will be unemployed. But the former will not starve, and I shall have made just use of my money. Starvation really occurs only when the due wages are not paid. If I pay due wages, surplus wealth will not accumulate in my hands. I shall not waste money on luxuries and add to the poverty. The workman whom I pay justly will in turn learn to pay others justly. Thus the stream of justice will not dry up; instead it will gather speed as it flows. And the

nation which has such a sense of justice will grow happy and prosper in the right direction.

According to this line of reasoning, economists are found to be wrong. They argue that increased competition means growing prosperity for a nation. This is not true in fact. Competition is desired because it reduces the rate of wages. The rich become richer thereby and the poor poorer. Such competition is likely to ruin a nation in the long run. The right law of demand and supply should ensure the payment of a just wage to a workman according to his worth. This, too, will mean competition, but the result will be that people will be happy and skilful, for, instead of being obliged to underbid one another, they will have to acquire new skills to secure employment. It is for this reason that men are drawn to government service. There, salaries are fixed according to the gradation of posts. The competition is only with regard to ability. A candidate does not offer to accept a lower salary but claims that he is abler than others. The same is the case with the Army and the Navy, and that is why there is much less corruption in these services. But only in trade and commerce is there unhealthy competition, as a result of which corrupt practices, such as fraud, chicanery, theft, have increased. Furthermore, goods of poor quality are manufactured. The manufacturer wants a lion's share of the price for himself, the workman to throw dust in the eyes of others and the consumer to exploit the situation to his own advantage. This poisons all human intercourse, there is starvation all round, strikes multiply, manufacturers become rogues and consumers disregard ethical considerations. One injustice leads to numerous others, and in the end the employer, the operative and the customer are all unhappy and meet with ruin. A people among whom these corrupt practices prevail comes to grief in the end. Its very wealth acts like a poison.

This is why men of wisdom have held that where Mammon is God, no one worships the true God. Wealth cannot be reconciled with God. God lives only in the homes of the poor. This is what the British profess, but in practice they place wealth above everything else, estimate the prosperity of the nation by the number of its rich, and their economists formulate precepts for everyone to get rich quickly. True eco-

nomics is the economics of justice. That people alone will be happy which learns how to do justice and be righteous under all conditions of life. All else is vain, a kind of moral perversity that presages doom. To teach the people to get rich at any cost is to teach them an evil lesson.

#### WHAT IS JUST?

We saw in the three preceding chapters that the generally accepted principles of economics are invalid. If acted upon, they will make individuals and nations unhappy. The poor will become poorer and the rich richer; neither will be any the happier for it.

Economists do not take men's conduct into account but estimate prosperity from the amount of wealth accumulated and so conclude that the happiness of nations depends upon their wealth alone. Hence they advocate greater accumulation of wealth through more and more work in factories. In England and elsewhere factories have multiplied because of the spread of these ideas. Large numbers of men leave their farms and concentrate in cities. They give up the pure and fresh air of the countryside and feel happy breathing the foul air of factories. As a result, the nation grows weaker, and avarice and immorality increase, and if someone suggests measures for eradicating vice, the so-called wise men argue that vice cannot be eliminated, that the ignorant cannot be educated all at once and that it is best to let things alone. While advancing this argument, they forget that it is the rich who are responsible for the immorality of the poor. The wretched workers slave for them day and night so that they may be kept supplied with their luxuries. They have not a moment to themselves for self-improvement. Thinking about the rich, they also want to be rich. When they fail in this, they become angry and resentful. They then forget themselves [in their anger], and having failed to gather wealth by honest means, turn in desperation to fraud. Both wealth and labour are thus wasted, else they are utilized for promoting fraud.

Labour, in the real sense of the term, is that which produces useful articles. Useful articles are those which support human life. Supporting human life means provision of food, clothing, etc., so as to enable men to live a moral life and to do good



while they live. For this purpose, large-scale industrial undertakings would appear to be useless. To seek to acquire wealth by establishing big factories is likely to lead to sin. Many people amass wealth but few make good use of it. If the making of money is likely to lead a nation to its destruction, that money is useless. On the contrary, present-day capitalists are responsible for widespread and unjust wars. Most of the wars of our times spring from greed for money.

We hear people say that it is impossible to educate others so as to improve them, and the best course would be to live as well as one could and accumulate wealth. Those who hold these views show little concern for ethical principles. For the person who values ethical principles and does not yield to avarice has a disciplined mind; he does not stray from the right path, and influences others merely by his example. If the individuals who constitute a nation do not observe moral principles of conduct, how can the nation become moral? If we behave as we choose and then point the accusing finger at an errant neighbour, how can the result of our actions be good?

We thus see that money is no more than a means which may make for happiness or misery. In the hands of a good man, it can be used for cultivating land and raising crops. Cultivators will find contentment in innocent labour and the nation will be happy. In the hands of bad men, it is used for the production, say, of gun-powder, and bringing utter ruin on the people. Both those who manufacture gun-powder and those who fall victims to it suffer in consequence. We thus see that there is no wealth besides life. That nation is wealthy which is moral. This is not the time for self-indulgence. Everyone must work according to his ability. As we saw in the illustrations earlier, if one man remains idle another has to labour twice as hard. This is at the root of the starvation prevalent in England. There are men who do little useful work themselves because of the wealth that has accumulated in their hands, and so force others to labour for them. This kind of labour, being unproductive, is not beneficial to the workers. In consequence, the national income suffers diminution. Though all men appear to be employed, we find on closer scrutiny that a large number are idle perforce. Moreover, envy is aroused, discontent takes root and, in the end, the rich and

the poor, the employer and the workman violate the bounds of decency in their mutual relations. As the cat and the mouse are always at variance with each other, so the rich and the poor, the employer and the workman become hostile to one another, and man, ceasing to be man, is reduced to the level of beasts.

#### CONCLUSION

Our summary of the great Ruskin's book is now concluded. Though some may have been bored by it, we advise those who have read the articles once to read them again. It will be too much to expect that all the readers of *Indian Opinion* will ponder over them and act on them. But even if a few readers make a careful study of the summary and grasp the central idea, we shall deem our labour to have been amply rewarded. Even if that does not happen, the reward of labour, as Ruskin says in the last chapter, consists in having done one's duty and that should satisfy one.

What Ruskin wrote for his countrymen, the British, is a thousand times more applicable to Indians. New ideas are spreading in India. The advent of a new spirit among the young who have received western education is of course to be welcomed. But the outcome will be beneficial only if that spirit is canalized properly; if it is not, it is bound to be harmful. From one side we hear the cry for *swarajya*; from another, for the quick accumulation of wealth by setting up factories like those in Britain.

Our people hardly understand what *swarajya* means. Natal enjoys *swarajya*, but we would say that, if we were to imitate Natal, *swarajya* would be no better than hell. The Natal whites tyrannize over the Kaffirs, hound out the Indians, and in their blindness give free rein to selfishness. If, by chance, Kaffirs and Indians were to leave Natal, they would destroy themselves in a civil war.

Shall we, then, hanker after the kind of *swarajya* which obtains in the Transvaal? General Smuts is one of their leading figures. He does not keep any promise, oral or written. He says one thing, does another. The British are disgusted with him. Under the guise of effecting economy, he has deprived British soldiers of livelihood and has been replacing

them with Dutchmen. We do not believe that in the long run this will make even the Dutch happy. Those who serve only their own interests will be ready to rob their own people after they have done with robbing others.

If we observe happenings all over the world, we shall be able to see that what people call *swarajya* is not enough to secure the nation's prosperity and happiness. We can perceive this by means of a simple example. All of us can visualize what would happen if a band of robbers were to enjoy *swarajya*. In the long run they would be happy only if they were placed under the control of men who were not themselves robbers. America, France and England are all great States. But there is no reason to think that they are really happy.

Real *swarajya* consists in restraint. He alone is capable of this who leads a moral life, does not cheat anyone, does not forsake truth and does his duty to his parents, his wife, his children, his servant and his neighbour. Such a man will enjoy *swarajya* wherever he may happen to live. A nation that has many such men always enjoys *swarajya*.

It is wrong normally for one nation to rule over another. British rule in India is an evil but we need not believe that any very great advantage would accrue to the Indians if the British were to leave India. The reason why they rule over us is to be found in ourselves; that reason is our disunity, our immorality and our ignorance.

If these three things were to disappear, not only would the British leave India without the rustling of a leaf, but it would be real *swarajya* that we would enjoy.

Many people exult at the explosion of bombs. This only shows ignorance and lack of understanding. If all the British were to be killed, those who kill them would become the masters of India, and as a result India would continue in a state of slavery. The bombs with which the British will have been killed will fall on India after the British leave. The man who killed the President of the French Republic was himself a Frenchman and the assassin of President Cleveland of America was an American.<sup>14</sup> We ought to be careful, therefore, not to be hasty and thoughtlessly to imitate the people of the West.

Just as we cannot achieve real *swarajya* by following the

path of evil—that is by killing the British -- so also will it not be possible for us to achieve it by establishing big factories in India. Accumulation of gold and silver will not bring *swarajya*. This has been convincingly proved by Ruskin.

Let it be remembered that western civilization is only a hundred years old, or to be more precise, fifty. Within this short span the western people appear to have been reduced to a state of cultural anarchy. We pray that India may never be reduced to the same state as Europe. The western nations are impatient to fall upon one another, and are restrained only by the accumulation of armaments all round. When the situation flares up, we will witness a veritable hell let loose in Europe. All white nations look upon the black races as their legitimate prey. This is inevitable when money is the only thing that matters. Wherever they find any territory, they swoop down on it like crows upon carrion. There are reasons to suggest that this is the outcome of their large industrial undertakings.

To conclude, the demand of *swarajya* is the demand of every Indian, and it is a just demand. But *swarajya* is to be achieved by righteous means. It must be real *swarajya*. It cannot be achieved by violent methods or by setting up factories. We must have industry, but of the right kind. India was once looked upon as a golden land, because Indians then were people of sterling worth. The land is still the same but the people have changed and that is why it has become arid. To transform it into a golden land again we must transmute ourselves into gold by leading a life of virtue. The philosopher's stone which can bring this about consists of two syllables: *satya*. If, therefore, every Indian makes it a point to follow truth always, India will achieve *swarajya* as a matter of course.

This is the substance of Ruskin's book.

*Sarvodaya* [9 articles] (G.)

*Indian Opinion*, 16 Apr. 18 July 1908

<sup>1</sup> The Advancement of All

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to Bentham's maxim of 'the greatest good of the greatest number'. Gandhi opposed it on moral grounds. Ruskin, too, criticized the construction of a 'science' of economics on the Newtonian model from which 'social affections' had been wholly abstracted. Ruskin argued that the greatest art or science was that which aroused 'the greatest number of the greatest ideas'

<sup>3</sup> (1819-1900) a Scotsman and author of many books on architecture, painting, social and industrial problems, the place of women in society, etc. Slade Professor of Art in Oxford for some time. Later became opposed to vivisection and usury and interested in workers' education and co-operative industrial settlements. Together with *Munira Puliensis* *Unto This Last* which was published as a series of articles in *Cornhill Magazine* expounds Ruskin's social utopia. Gandhi describes Ruskin as one of the three moderns "who made a deep impress on me." *Unto This Last* brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation. I arose with the dawn ready to reduce these principles to practice. Polak commended this book to Gandhi who read it on the train journey between Johannesburg and Durban. See *Autobiography*, Part IV, Ch. XXVIII.

<sup>4</sup> Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, St. Matthew, Ch. XX, v. 14. "I will give unto this last, even as unto thee."

St. Matthew, Ch. X, v. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Ruskin found Beauty in "the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things, more especially of the joyful and right exertion of perfect life in man." *Modern Painters*, Vol. II, Part III, Sec. I, Ch. 3. Gandhi too speaks of the beauty of *atyagraha* which is suffering undergone to exemplify Truth.

<sup>7</sup> Pledges of bonded labour in return for the provision of the debtor's current needs.

<sup>8</sup> Farming implements, seeds, etc.

<sup>9</sup> The food grains and farming implements withheld by the middleman.

<sup>10</sup> This corresponds to Ruskin's chapter *Qui Judat Terram*. "Ye that be judges of the earth, love righteousness."

<sup>11</sup> 993-933 B.C. believed in Ruskin's day to have been the author of Proverbs in the Old Testament.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Proverbs, Ch. XXII, v. 6, and Ch. X, v. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Proverbs, Ch. XXII, v. 2. "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." and Proverbs, Ch. XXIX, v. 13. "The poor and the deceitful man meet together; the Lord lighteneth both their eyes."

<sup>14</sup> President Cleveland died a natural death. Gandhi may have had Lincoln in mind.

## § 2. Sarvodaya

### 181 THE GREATEST-GOOD-OF-ALL PRINCIPLE

A constant reader of *Young India* sends the following: <sup>1</sup>

I reproduce this letter for it helps me to elucidate my own position. If such a very careful reader of *Young India*, as I know this correspondent is, misunderstands my position as is evident from his letter, how many more occasional readers must have done likewise? Several readers did draw my attention to the

danger of a misunderstanding arising owing to the traditional hardness of our hearts which makes us prone to seize every opportunity of doing violence. One can only be one ought to be - most careful in the handling of delicate problems; but no fear of misuse of statements can be permitted to stop a free and honest discussion of fundamental truths. For me, I shall learn to be and do right only by prayerful discussion, elucidation and interchange of views. This letter I have quoted is an instance in point. The discussion has brought to light an honest misunderstanding of difference between the correspondent and myself in the interpretation of the same principle.

Whilst I am of opinion that Dr. Blazer was well acquitted, according to the test laid down by me, he was wrong in taking the life of his daughter. It betrayed want of faith in the humanity of those around him. There was no warrant for him to suppose that the daughter would not have been cared for by others. The position in the case of dogs under the circumstances assumed by me is materially different from the position in which Dr. Blazer found himself. Nor am I able to subscribe to the view that an idiot has no soul. I believe that even the lower creation have souls.

Weightier still is the difficulty which another earnest reader puts and which may be thus summarized:

I appreciate the position you have taken up. It is the only true position. But does not your argument after all resolve itself into the utilitarian doctrine of the greater good of the greater number? And if that is your position, wherein does the doctrine of non-violence differ from the utilitarian which makes no pretence to non-violence and which will not hesitate to destroy life if the destruction would lead to the greater good of the greater number?

In the first place even though the outward act may be the same, its implications will vary according to the motive prompting it. Thus as non-violence in the West stops at man and, even then, only where possible, there is no compunction felt either over subjecting animals to vivisection for the supposed greater good of mankind or over heaping up most destructive armaments also in the name of the same doctrine of utility. A votary of non-violence, on the other hand, might

have done one act of destruction in common with the utilitarian, but he would prefer to die rather than make himself party to vivisection or to an endless multiplication of armaments.

The fact is that a votary of *ahimsa* cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greater number, and therefore he and the utilitarian will converge at many points in their career but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself. The absolutist, when he kills a dog, does so either out of weakness or in rare cases for the sake of the dog himself. That it is a dangerous thing to decide what is or is not good for the dog, and that he may therefore make grievous mistakes is irrelevant to the fact of the motive prompting the act. The absolutist's sphere of destruction will be always the narrowest possible. The utilitarian's has no limit. Judged by the standard of non-violence the late War was wholly wrong. Judged by the utilitarian standard each party has justified it according to its idea of utility. Even the Jallianwala Bagh massacre was justified by its perpetrators on the grounds of utility. And precisely on the same ground the anarchist justifies his assassinations. But none of these acts can possibly be justified on the greatest-good-of-all principle.

'The Greatest Good of All'

*Young India*, 9 Dec 1926

<sup>1</sup> The correspondent enclosed a newspaper cutting which carried a report of how a Dr Blazer had chloroformed his imbecile daughter because he felt there would be no one to look after her once he was dead. It also carried the report of a French actress who shot her lover at his own request as he was suffering from an incurable disease. The jury in both cases acquitted the accused.

## 182. ORGANIZATION AND DISCIPLINE

Some workers in the Khadi Service write . . .<sup>1</sup>

Here there is an obvious confusion of ideals. Distorted notions of superiority and inferiority have given rise to indiscipline in almost all the national organizations. Many people think that to abolish distinctions of rank means passport to anarchy and licence. Whereas the meaning of abolition of distinctions should be perfect discipline, perfect because of voluntary obedience to the laws of the organization to which we may belong, i.e., the laws of our being. For man is himself a wonderful organization and what applies to him applies to the social or political organizations of which he may be a member. And even as though the different members of the body are not inferior to any, they are voluntarily subject to the control of the mind, whilst the body is in a healthy state, so have the members of an organization, whilst none is superior or inferior to any other, to be voluntarily subject to the mind of the organization which is the head. An organization which has no directing mind or which has no members co-operating with the mind suffers from paralysis and is in a dying condition.

The correspondents who have signed the letter I have reproduced do not realize that if they do not accept the elementary discipline involved in giving regular attendance, that *khadi* office of which they are members cannot work profitably to its purpose, i.e., service of *Daridranarayana*. Let them realize that the voluntary discipline of a *khadi* office should be much stricter than the compulsory discipline of a Government office. If the chief of the *khadi* office concerned does not attend always in time, it is highly likely that he is engaged in *khadi* work even when he is not at his office. For whilst the staff has fairly regular hours the chief has no hours of recreation. If he is honest and realizes the responsibilities of his high office, he has to work day and night in order to make *khadi* what it should be. It is one thing to come into a going concern, totally another to enter a newly formed organization intended to be the largest of its kind in the world. Such an organization requires the vigilant, intelligent and honest watch not of one worker but of thousands. These workers have to come into being by belonging to the existing organizations and imposing



on themselves the hardest discipline of which they may be capable

'Necessity of Discipline'

*Young India*, 3 May 1928

<sup>1</sup> The workers had complained that though they were required to attend *khadi* office punctually the Secretary himself was not punctual. They had asked 'Why should this inferiority and superiority prevail among workers in the same field?'

### 183 SELF-REALIZATION AND SELF-ABNEGATION

[Before October, 1928]

Mr Hall tells how he presented a series of questions to Mr Gandhi the first of which referred to the choice of a life career which would make the greatest contribution to society. On this point Mr Gandhi said

The vital consideration is not so much the choice of one or another profession as the achieving of self-realization. In facing the problem of a career, a man should emphasize, above all else, the spiritual aspects of life. With this uppermost in his thoughts, he should test his own potentialities, discover how he can best meet the particular needs of the local community in which he finds himself, and apply himself to meeting those needs to the utmost of his ability.

Q What relation should religion and character bear to education in our present-day programme?

A Education, character and religion should be regarded as convertible terms. There is no true education which does not tend to produce character, and there is no true religion which does not determine character. Education should contemplate the whole life. Mere memorizing and book-learning is not education. I have no faith in the so-called systems of education which produce men of learning without the backbone of character.

Q. What fitting substitute can the Western nations find for militarism?

A. Militarism is essentially self-assertion. I should therefore substitute for self-assertion self-abnegation.

Q. But what is meant by the term 'self-abnegation'?

A. The sense in which Christ understood it: 'He who loseth his life shall find it.'

Q. What is the way out of the present seemingly hopeless antagonism between religious factions in all parts of the world?

A. Charity. We must learn toleration and respect for others. Every religion in some measure satisfies the spiritual needs of men. If a religious act, such as tomtoming, annoys me, I should not try to have it prohibited, but should realize that it ministers to other people's needs, and remove myself from the scene of disturbance.

I have ceased to declare myself publicly on this issue. My views are well known. As the French proverb has it, 'He who excuses himself accuses himself.' I believe that by maintaining silence, my message is more forcibly conveyed than by constant admonition. There is, however, no need of despairing of this or any other issue where the right is involved. The world is moving on the right course. When you consider that our mortal lives are mere specks in relation to the whole of time, you may appreciate that the world may be progressing, even when progress is not apparent. I am supremely hopeful.

Interview with W. W. Hall of

*The North American Review*

*The Indian Review*, Oct. 1908

## 184. OVER-INDULGENCE AND THE NEEDS OF ALL

June 17, 1932

I, for one, daily realize this truth from experience, that Nature provides for the needs of every living creature from moment to moment, and I also see that, voluntarily or involuntarily, knowingly or unknowingly, we violate this great law every moment of our lives. All of us can see that, in consequence of our doing so, on the one hand large numbers suffer through over-indulgence and, on the other, countless people suffer through want. Our endeavour, therefore, is to save mankind from the calamity of widespread starvation, on the one hand, and, on the other, destruction of food-grains by the American millionaires through a false understanding of economic laws. It is true, of course, that it is impossible at present to live in perfect conformity with this natural law. But that need not worry us.

Letter to Chhaganlal Joshi

*Mahadevbhaini Diary*, Vol. I, p. 224

## 185. SARVODAYA, NON-VIOLENCE, AND TAPASCHARYA

Segaon,<sup>1</sup>

July 21, 1938

*Sarvodaya* is impossible without *satyagraha*. The word *satyagraha* should be understood here in its etymological sense. There can be no insistence on truth where there is no non-violence. Hence, the attainment of *sarvodaya* depends upon the attainment of non-violence. The attainment of non-violence in its turn depends upon *tapascharya*. *Tapascharya*, again, should be pure. Ceaseless effort, discretion, etc., should form part of it. Pure *tapascharya* leads to pure knowledge. Experience shows that although people talk of non-violence, many are mentally so lazy that they do not even take the trouble of familiarizing themselves with the facts. Take an example. India is a poor country. We wish to do away with poverty. But how many people have made a study of how this poverty came about,

what its implications are, how it can be removed, etc? A devotee of non-violence should be full of such knowledge

It is the duty of *Sarvodaya* to create such means and not to enter into controversies. Editors of *Sarvodaya* should forget Gandhism. There is no such thing as Gandhism. I have not put anything new before India, I have only presented an ancient thing in a new way. I have tried to utilize it in a new field. Hence my ideas cannot be appropriately called Gandhism. We shall adopt truth wherever we find it, praise it wherever we see it, and pursue it. In other words, in every sentence of *Sarvodaya*, we should catch a glimpse of non-violence and knowledge.

‘What is *Sarvodaya*?’ (H )

GN 7680

<sup>1</sup> Message for the first issue of *Sarvodaya*, a journal published by D. B. Kalalkar and Dada Dharmadhikari.

## 186 THE WELL-BEING OF SOCIETY

Sevagram,  
February 8, 1942

Thus writes Shri Shankarrao Dev

In the last issue of *Harijan* in your article ‘A Deplorable Incident’ you say to the rich ‘Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours: it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society. When I read this, the first question that arose in my mind was ‘Why first earn crores and then use them for society?’ As society today is constituted the means of earning crores are bound to be impure and one who earns crores by impure means cannot be expected to follow the *mantra* *thena thyakthena bhunithaha*,<sup>1</sup> because in the very process of earning crores by impure means the man’s character is bound to be tainted or vitiated. And, moreover, you have always been emphasizing the purity of means. But I am afraid that there is a possibility of people misunderstanding that you are laying an emphasis here more on the ends than on the means.

I request you to emphasize as much, if not more, on the purity of means of earning money as on spending. If purity of means is strictly observed, then, according to me, crores could not be accumulated at all and the difficulty of spending for society will assume a very minor prospect.

I must demur. Surely a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means, assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches. For the purpose of my argument, I have assumed that private possession itself is not held to be impure. If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value, I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means. This actually happened when the Cullinan diamond, much more valuable than the Kohinoor, was found. Such instances can be easily multiplied. My argument was surely addressed to such men. I have no hesitation in endorsing the proposition that generally rich men and for that matter most men are not particular as to the way they make money. In the application of the method of non-violence one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response.

Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, only not for personal aggrandisement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I therefore suggest that my advice that monied men may earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound. *Thena thyakthena bhunjithaha* is a *mantra* based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour.

‘Not Necessarily Impure’

*Haryan*, 22 Feb. 1942

<sup>1</sup> ‘Having renounced, then enjoy’

## 187. SELF-DEPENDENCE AND INTERDÉPENDENCE

Sevagram,

November 29, 1945

Q. The object of the Constructive Programme is stated to be the preparation of the people for a non-violent political order. Is this definition correct? Or will it be better to define such a social and political order as one in which no one would be able to exploit the labour of another?

A. Your definition is correct but it is incomplete. In what way it is incomplete will be explained in the answer to your next question.

Q. If my definition is correct I feel such a social and political order can be achieved theoretically even by our making the largest use of machinery. In that case is it necessary to have the maximum number of village industries for the non-violent political order? If so, why?

A. Non-violence cannot be divided into compartments. Non-violence is an inherent attribute of man or, at any rate, it should be an attribute of man during his waking hours. Devotion to non-violence is the highest expression of his conscious state. If we thus conceive *ahimsa* we should satisfy all our necessities by the labour of our hands. If we do not do this we shall have to depend upon other powers and as long as such condition persists we shall be unable to realize a state of fearlessness. Another danger in making more and more use of machinery is that we have to make great efforts for the protection of it, that is to say, we shall have to keep an army as is being done today elsewhere in the world. The fact is that even if there is no danger of aggression from outside we shall be slaves to those who will be in control of the big machinery. Take the case of the atom bomb. Those nations who have atom bombs are feared even by their friends. If we take a wise view, we shall be saved from the working of machinery.

Q. One of the reasons given in favour of hand-spinning is that it makes one self-sufficient. Can one who is self-sufficient serve society better than one who is dependent on others? Do you mean to say

that there is such a connection between self-sufficiency and social service that the more one is self-sufficient the more is one's capacity for social service?

A. In order to satisfy this doubt also we will have to keep in mind the non-violent outlook because truth and non-violence form the foundation of the order of my conception. Our first duty is that we should not be a burden on society, i.e., we should be self-sufficient. That means self-sufficiency by itself is a kind of service. After becoming self-sufficient we shall use our spare time for the service of others. If all become self-sufficient no one will have any difficulty. In that case no one will be required to undertake service of others. But we have not yet reached that stage and therefore we have to think of social service. Even if we succeed in realizing complete self-sufficiency, man being a social animal we shall have to accept service in some form or other. That is, man is as much dependent on others as he is dependent on himself.

When dependence becomes necessary in order to keep society in good order it is no longer dependence but becomes co-operation. There is a fragrance in co-operation and there is no one weak or strong among the co-operators. Everyone is equal. There is a feeling of helplessness in dependency. Members of a family are as much self-dependent as interdependent, but there is no feeling of mine or thine. That is why they are called co-operators. Similarly, when we take a society, a nation or the entire mankind as a family all men become co-operators. If we can conceive a picture of such co-operation we shall find that there is no need of depending upon lifeless machines. Or we shall have to use them the least, not the most, and therein lies the real security and self-protection of society.

Q. You lay more emphasis on spinning than on agriculture. Is there any political reason behind it? Or is it because people cannot take to farming as easily as they can to spinning?

A. I do not make such divisions as social, economic and political. What is political is also social and economic. One includes the others. It is true that we make and have to make such divisions for clarity of understanding. One of the reasons

why I have not laid stress on agriculture is that even my knowledge of it is almost nil. How will I be able to enlighten you if I put emphasis on it? It is not so in the case of the *charkha*. I have acquired enough knowledge of it. Secondly, under foreign rule the *charkha* had died out; it had been destroyed. Agriculture can never be destroyed but its form has been so changed that it has increased the slavery of the people. The third reason for putting emphasis on the *charkha* is that skill of hand has a very small place in agriculture. There is hardly any other industry in which the hands and the fingers are so much used as they are in the various processes that go to make *khadi*. The fourth reason is that foreign power first takes hold of the land and through it controls the other things. Therefore Government help is very necessary for improvement in agriculture. For these and other similar reasons I have laid more emphasis on hand-spinning.

Q. One of the features of the material development of human society appears to be that man is tending to move more and more from self-sufficiency to dependency. Don't you think this tendency is not right and that there will be revival of the opposite tendency?

A. I take this question to mean that society is advancing towards machinery. If I have understood the question right, my answer is that society must get rid of its slavery to the machine. By being slaves to the machine our slavery to our senses and their activity also increases immensely.

Q. Are you confident that the Constructive Programme will be able to achieve its object during your lifetime by mere propaganda? Don't you think taking into consideration human frailties (lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and jealousy) that there will be need for 'legislative aid' to make the people take to the Constructive Programme on any wide scale especially in this machine age? Will there be any violation of the principle of non-violence in taking such help from the elected representatives of the people? If so how?

A. I have said many a time that we will have to take help from the Government on our own terms. Not only that, we will have to take help from the whole world. There was a time when I felt that we could have only the barest minimum of



help from the legislators in the matter of Constructive Programme. But now I have come to realize that if the representatives of the people go into the legislatures we can secure their help. Along with this we must bear in mind that we cannot appreciate the value of the Constructive Programme properly if we cannot carry it on in adverse circumstances. Other people of course can't. I can say dispassionately but from experience that the strength of the people has increased in proportion to the progress of the Constructive Programme. If we can make the Constructive Programme universal and get it implemented through the people, then *swaraj* is in our hands.

Answers to Questions (H)

*Khadī Jagat*, Dec 1945

# 188 MORAL WORK AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Shantiniketan,

December 20, 1945

I want to hear from your lips what inspires you to be here and what are the difficulties that confront you.

Q Should Shantiniketan allow itself to be drawn into political work?

A. I have no difficulty in saying that Shantiniketan and Visva-Bharati ought not to be mixed up with politics. Every institution has its limitations. This institution should set limitations upon itself unless it is to be cheap. When I say that Shantiniketan should not get mixed up with politics, I do not mean that it should have no political ideal. Complete independence must be its ideal, as it is that of the country. But that very ideal would require it to keep out of the present-day political turmoil. I was asked this question when I was here thirty years ago and the reply I then gave was the same as I have given today. "In fact, it applies with even greater force today.

Q. In order to make Visva-Bharati really an international university, should we not try to increase the material resources of the university and provide greater facilities and ordinary comforts of life to attract scholars and research workers of outstanding merit from all over the country?

A. By material resources I suppose you mean finance. Let me then say that your question is addressed to a person who does not swear by material resources. 'Material resources' is after all a comparative term. For instance, I do not go without food and clothing. In my own way I have tried—more than perhaps any other man—to increase the level of material resources of the average man in India. But it is my firm conviction that Visva-Bharati will fail to attract the right type of talent and scholarship if it relies on the strength of the material resources or material attractions that it can offer. Its attraction must be moral or ethical, or else it will become just one out of the many educational institutions in India. That was not what Gurudev lived and died for. I do not mean that creature comforts should not be provided to the staff and workers who work here. There are ample material comforts in evidence here already. If I stayed here longer and had my way they might be considerably reduced. As Visva-Bharati progresses and more and more gifts and donations begin to pour in, in due course it will be able to provide more attractions to scholars and research workers, if it wants to. But if I were asked for advice I would say: 'Do not yield to this temptation.' Visva-Bharati must take its stand on the advancement of moral worth. If it does not stand for that, it is worth nothing.

Q. What must be done so that the institution might not lose its high moral appeal? What remedy do you suggest for it?

A. Every one of you should understand the significance of moral worth. Moral worth is easily distinguished from material worth. The one leads to devotion to moral value, the other to Mammon-worship. What distinguishes man from the four-footed beast is merely the recognition of moral worth, i.e., the greater the moral worth of a person the greater his

distinction. If you believe in this ideal, you should ask yourselves why you are here and what you are doing.

Every worker must have, of course, food, clothing, etc., for himself and his dependants. But you do not belong to Visva-Bharati merely because Visva-Bharati feeds, clothes and finds creature comforts for you. You belong to it because you cannot do otherwise, because your moral worth increases day by day by working for its ideals. Therefore, every defect that crops up, every difficulty that obstructs its working, will be found to be ultimately traceable to some defect in your outlook in regard to moral worth. I have been connected with many institutions for over sixty years and I have come to the conclusion that every difficulty in their working was traceable to a defect in the understanding of moral value.

Q. We are trying to serve villagers. We find that at every step our activity is blocked by the social environment in the villages. The joyless routine of life there, the stagnation and the incubus of evil social customs obstruct our efforts. Should we not work for the eradication of these before we can hope for success in our other activities, and if so how can it be done?

A. Ever since I came to India I have felt that social revolution is a much more difficult thing to achieve than the political revolution, by which I mean ending our present slavery under the British rule. There are some critics who say that India cannot attain her political and economic emancipation till we get social emancipation. I regard it as a snag and a conundrum set to puzzle us, because I have found that the absence of political emancipation retards even our efforts for bringing about social and economic emancipation. At the same time it is also true that without a social revolution we will not be able to leave India happier than when we were born. I can, however, indicate no royal road for bringing about a social revolution except that we should represent it in every detail of our own lives.

Force has been used to alter the structure of society in some countries. But I have purposely eliminated it from our consideration. So my advice to you is: Try again and again and never say that you are defeated. Do not get impatient and

say, 'the people are no good'. Rather say, 'I am no good.' If the people do not respond within the time limit prescribed by you the failure is yours, not theirs. It is thankless and laborious work. But you do not expect thanks for your work. Work that is undertaken for love is no burden—it is pure joy.

Q. In an *ashram*, does the introduction of salary system raise or degrade the ideal of the institution?

A. I have no difficulty in saying that it makes no difference whether you pay a fixed salary or your expenses are paid for you. Both methods can be tried. The danger to be guarded against is this: if you pay a man his bazaar price you do not carry out the spirit of the Ashram. We should rather do without talent and ability, be it of the highest order, if it demands its bazaar value. In other words, we should wait till talent is attracted to the institution, not for money but for something else for which the institution stands. Nor should you let the principle of 'according to want' take you even beyond bazaar values. The salary system in Visva-Bharati is not a thing to complain of. The difficulties to which you have referred cannot be removed by mere tinkering. You must find out and remove the causes which are at the root of the defects you have in mind.

Q. How can we make headway against cynicism or lack of faith that we find among the youngsters?

A. I heave a sigh of despair when you ask me that question. When you find that your pupils are without faith you should say to yourself: 'I am without faith.' I have found that again and again in my own experience. And each time the discovery has been like an invigorating bath for me. The Biblical saying 'remove the beam from thine own eye before ye point out the mote in thy neighbour's'<sup>1</sup> is even more appropriate in the case of pupil and teacher. The pupil comes to you to find in you something infinitely better than himself. Rather than complain, 'Oh! he has no faith. How can I implant faith in him', it would be far better that you resigned from your job.

Q. The intellectual tradition of Gurudev is being fairly well maintained here but I am afraid that the idealism for which he stood does not find full scope. There must be something wrong in an organization that leads to such a result. What is the remedy? Secondly, should our institution only work to make culture available to the man in the street? This is your ideal. At the same time should not there be a place where higher culture can be preserved for the initiated? This was Gurudev's ideal. Such an institution will necessarily be exclusive and for the select only. I am a follower both of yours and Gurudev's ideals and I am torn by the conflict between the two.

A. To take the second question first, it is a reflection both on Gurudev and myself. I have found no real conflict between us. I started with a disposition to detect a conflict between Gurudev and myself but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none.

Regarding your question, all I can say is that the feeling 'I am all right but there is something wrong with the institution' betrays self-righteousness. It is a killing thing. When you feel within yourself that you are all right but everything around is wrong, the conclusion which you should draw for yourself is that everything is all right but there is something wrong within you.

Discussion with Workers and Staff Members  
*Vishva-Bharati News*, Vol. XIV, No. 9

<sup>1</sup> St Matthew 7.

189. MASTER AND SERVANT

Poona,  
March 1, 1946

The institution of domestic servants is an old one. But the attitude of master towards servant has changed from time to time. Some regard servants as members of the family whereas others look upon them as slaves or chattels. Between these two extreme views may be summed up the attitude of society in general towards servants. Nowadays servants are in great de-

mand everywhere. They have become conscious of their value and naturally demand their own conditions of pay and service. This would be proper, if it were invariably coupled with a proper understanding and performance of their duty. In that event they would cease to be servants and would earn for themselves the status of members of the family. The belief in the efficacy of violence is, however, in the air. How then can servants properly win the status of members of their masters' families? That is a question that may well be asked.

I hold that a man who desires the co-operation of, and wishes to co-operate with others should not be dependent on servants. If anyone has to have one at a time of scarcity of servants, he will have to pay what is demanded and accept all other conditions with the result that he will, instead of being master, become the servant of his employee. This is good for neither the master nor the so-called servant. It has only one thought, that of pursuing his self-interest. But if what an individual seeks is not slavery but the co-operation of a fellow-being, he will not only serve himself but also him whose co-operation he needs. Through the extension of this principle, a man's family will become coterminous with the world and his attitude towards his fellow-beings will also undergo a corresponding change. There is no other way of reaching the desired consummation.

He who wants to act on this principle will be content to start with small beginnings. In spite of a man's ability to command the co-operation of thousands, he must have sufficient self-restraint and self-respect in him to enable him to stand alone. Such a person will never dream of looking on any person as his menial and try to keep him under subjugation. In fact, he will forget altogether that he is master of his servants and will try his best to bring them to his level. In other words, he should be content to do without what others cannot have.

'Whose Need?' (G.)

*Harijan*, 10 Mar. 1946

## 190. THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

New Delhi

October 14, 1946

Man should earnestly desire the well-being of all God's creation and pray that he may have the strength to do so. In desiring the well-being of all lies his own welfare; he who desires only his own or his community's welfare is selfish and it can never be well with him.

Written Message to Prayer Meeting

*Haryana*, 20 Oct. 1946

§ 3. *Yajna* and Sacrifice

## 191. SELF-SACRIFICE

Sacrifice is the law of life. It runs through and governs every walk of life. We can do nothing or get nothing without paying a price for it, as it would be said in commercial parlance or, in other words, without sacrifice. It would secure the salvation of the community to which we belong; we must pay for it, that is, sacrifice self. Working for the community, we may keep for ourselves only a portion of what is secured, and no more. And herein lies the sacrifice. At times we have to pay dearly. True sacrifice lies in deriving the greatest pleasure from the deed, no matter what the risk may be. Christ died on the Cross of Calvary and left Christianity as a glorious heritage. Hampden suffered, but the ship-money went. Joan of Arc was burnt as a witch to her eternal honour and to the everlasting disgrace of her murderers; the world knows the result of her self-sacrifice. The Americans bled for their independence.

We have given these illustrations to draw a contrast between the very little that the Indians as individuals have to sacrifice so that the community may gain a great deal, and the much that had to be sacrificed in the instances quoted by us. The Indians in South Africa in general, and the Transvaal

in particular, are undergoing many troubles. Their fate in the Transvaal hangs in the balance. Their very means of livelihood may be ruthlessly snatched away from them. They may be unceremoniously driven to ghettos. What, then, is the self-sacrifice to be performed by the British Indians before they may expect relief? Every Indian must consider the question as if it affected him personally, put his hands into his pocket for the common good, give his time and energy. Individual differences must be sunk in the face of common danger. Personal ease and personal gain should be surrendered. To all this must be added patience and self-control. The slightest deviation 'from the strait and narrow path' mapped out here would bring us down the precipice, not because the cause is at all unjust or weak, but because the opposition set up against us is overwhelming.

No race or community has ever achieved anything without the communal spirit. The desire to advance a national cause may be present, but a mere desire, while a necessary stage in the progress towards the goal, is useless without more. There should be the readiness to adopt the means required for the attainment. A chain is no stronger than the weakest link in it, and unless we are prepared to stand and work shoulder to shoulder without flinching and without being daunted by temporary disappointments, failure would be the only fit reward, or rather punishment, for gross neglect of duty. Nor is there any heroic sacrifice required by communities living under British rule; well-sustained, continuous and temperate constitutional effort is the main thing needed. Earnestness commands success anywhere. It does so much more in the British Dominions. If the British machinery is slow to move, the genius of the nation being conservative, it is also quick to perceive and recognise earnestness and unity. Even a mother, says an Indian proverb, does not serve without being asked much less does a British Government. We, therefore, hope that our countrymen throughout South Africa will make a careful note of this aspect of the British Constitution, and refuse to rest until full justice is granted

'Self-Sacrifice'

*Indian Opinion*, 21 Jan. 1904



## 192. SACRIFICE AND DARING

Man's nature is such that he does not notice very common things. We say that man cannot live a moment without food and water; but while saying so, we do not realize that air is far more vital than food and water. Because we always breathe, we pay no attention to that fact. And because we feel hunger and thirst from time to time, we call them to mind frequently. This is also true of sacrifice. Life is sustained by sacrifice, yet no attention is paid to it.

Sacrifice is of many kinds. Today we shall discuss only the sacrifice of self-interest. Everyone knows of the nobility of sacrifice. The more a man reflects on it, the more he feels its necessity and understands it. If primitive people think about it, they, too, will surely realize it. The wise will not only experience it and understand it, but after understanding it, will even volunteer with such sacrifice. We know this from infancy, and hence we often say that nothing can be gained without labour. But as we grow and as we reflect, through personal experience as also through the study of history, we comprehend the import of this ordinary saying more and more. It takes some effort to climb a hillock, but a great deal more to ascend a mountain; it requires little risk and little pains to do a small job, but a big task calls for more risk and more pains. If we see the necessity of ascending a mountain, we do not mind the great effort; and if we want to do a big job, we think nothing of the risk and pains involved. That is to say, we do not shy at sacrifice once it is considered necessary. Our brethren living in this country are not unfamiliar with such a line of thought. They come here and earn a little as a result of their sacrifice. They left their homes, gave up their kith and kin, and crossed the ocean; they made this sacrifice, and that after careful thought. They could come to this country and improve their condition only because they made this sacrifice and showed daring. In other words, they understand quite well that sacrifice wisely made leads to good results. That is why they make sacrifices from time to time and attempt to better their lot. We are hopeful that, through continuous and wise sacrifice, they will improve their own and the general condition day by day.

We write today on one's obligation of sacrifice because the whites are bent on making our condition in this country, chiefly in the Transvaal, extremely difficult. One by one, our common rights are being snatched away from us. Even then no one conducts a powerful fight on our behalf. Therefore, the whites think us to be helpless and weak; and their arrogance grows daily. The local government is under the control of the whites and, as it fights shy of displeasing them, it accepts their perversity, however improper and unjust, and confirms it; and then gives the British Government to understand that it is obliged to do so in order to respect public opinion. To our misfortune, the British Government does not use its authority and exert sufficient pressure against this misuse of public opinion. The Government of India, whose special obligation it is to protect us, appears to raise its voice a little at times out of fear – but only a little. When pressure was exerted on our behalf, and Lord Milner made a demand for Indian labour and we thus got a chance to state our case, we said that, if he would improve the condition of free Indians, we would send out labourers from India willing to accept slavery for a time! Our rights have nothing to do with the slavery of labourers, and yet such a condition was laid down. From this the inference can be drawn that the Government of India cannot improve the condition of Indians settled in the Transvaal, if the Transvaal withdraws its proposal to indent Indian labour to work as slaves. We hear nothing of Natal or the Orange River Colony – as if all was well there! Our condition is unfortunate and hence we have to write repeatedly of our duties and obligations. Such sayings of our elders as 'You cannot go to Heaven unless you die', and 'Dependence on others always results in disappointment' come to mind at the time of such sad experiences, and we appreciate their significance.

This much should be remembered, that the British Government's intentions are fair and that it desires to do justice. The rule is British and hence it is incumbent upon us to understand British politics. As we study British statecraft and its rules and regulations, we shall understand in what manner we should present our demands; and if we understand that, it is not very difficult to realize our aspirations. It takes time, but in the

end the thing intended comes to pass if it is reasonable. It is not that it takes time for Indians alone to get justice. Consider Ireland's example; British nature is like that. It is now our duty to bear this in mind and labour on. If we cherish noble thoughts and look upon another's happiness as our own and another's gain as our gain, and go on doing our work with single-mindedness, we shall certainly attain our objective, because we ask for justice, not favour

'Sacrifice' (1) (G),  
*Indian Opinion*, 21 Jan 1904

### 193. SACRIFICE AND UNITY

Most of us have learnt by experience that unity promotes the public good. Twenty years ago, the persecution of Indians in Natal had grown so much that the Government had to appoint a special commission. After much investigation, it finally gave its verdict in our favour. [Since] the whites had the virtues of diligence and unity in ample measure, the persecution continued, and the demand to confine Indians to Locations was made again and again. As, at that time, there was not the requisite unity among the Indian population, their troubles did not cease. On the contrary, they became more intense. Soon after Natal secured self-rule, laws designed to insult and harass Indians began to be enacted. The Indians woke up though belatedly and, because they commenced working with enthusiasm and vigilance, further oppression stopped. Else, everyone would be in a Location today. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm lasted only about three years; even so, we profited much. Though that enthusiasm is absent today, a unity of purpose is evolving, and if it gathers strength, our condition cannot but improve. It is easy here, on reflection, to realize the importance of sacrifice. When our people began to sacrifice self-interest, an awareness of higher ends blossomed forth and finally yielded good fruit. Without some sacrifice, there cannot be unity and concerted action. Society has been built on sacrifice.

We would draw the particular attention of our brethren in the Transvaal to this article, because the condition there is disorganized and saddening. Until now we believed that the Government would certainly do us justice, and we did not think of going to a court of law. But if the government remains under the influence of the white population and is either disinclined or powerless to do justice, it will be absolutely necessary for the entire community to meet, consider the matter and take appropriate steps. Surely, in doing so, they will, if need be, sacrifice time or money and later, both. Now the situation is very critical, and the opportunity once lost cannot be regained. Our Transvaal brethren should bear this in mind and make the fullest endeavour to protect themselves, and we are confident they will spare no effort in doing so. Our demand is just, and if we direct our movement with wisdom, we cannot but gain victory ultimately. This is the time to unite and to give of time and money to the cause. We must do our duty; the will of God will then come to pass. A story about a cartman, which we read in our childhood, is worth recalling. When a wheel of his cart got stuck in mire, he started praying to God. Thereupon God said that his work would not get done by mere prayer. If he made the effort, God would help in the sequel. Thereafter, the cartman laboured hard, and the wheel was extricated. We can all understand the moral of this without explication. To make all possible effort is our duty; the result is in God's hands.

'Sacrifice — 2' (G.)

*Indian Opinion*, 28 Jan. 1904

#### 191. *TAJNA AND NON-CO-OPERATION*

They who live on the *amrit*<sup>1</sup> of what remains after a *yajna*<sup>2</sup> attain to eternal *Brahma*,<sup>3</sup> O Arjuna, those who do no *yajna*, even this world is not for them, not to speak of the next.<sup>4</sup>

Narada gave his considered opinion that Parvati should go and do *tapasya*. Her parents liked the idea, for *tapasya* brings happiness and destroys sin and suffering. *Tapasya* is the basis of all creation.

They, therefore, desired that Parvati, taking this to heart, should go and do *tapasya*.

The term *yajna* can be interpreted in a number of ways but there is only one meaning acceptable to men of all faiths, and that is, to be ready even to lay down one's life for true welfare. Parvati wanted such a one as Siva as her consort and so was advised to do penance. If anyone wants to know what was the penance she did, he should go to the incomparable work of Tulsidas. A woman gives birth to children in suffering and sacrifices herself in bringing them up. Life comes out of death. A seed must disintegrate under earth and perish before it can grow into grain. Harishchandra went through endless suffering to honour his word as a man of truth, Jesus put on a crown of thorns to win salvation for his people, allowed his hands and feet to be nailed and suffered agonies before he gave up the ghost. This has been the law of *yajna* from immemorial times. Without *yajna* this earth cannot exist even for a moment. Before the Turks could conquer Constantinople,<sup>5</sup> they sacrificed innumerable troops and used the corpses as a bridge. I cannot help feeling that we want to advance our country without fulfilling this immutable law of suffering which has prevailed in India.

We want full independence without the sacrifice of a single life. We would be happy if we could do without sacrifice of money either. A great many people have got frightened of non-co-operation. What must be the reasons? I can think of only two: first, that people may have to starve if they give up their jobs and, second, if anyone makes a mistake and the Government resorts to firing, thousands may lose their lives. This means that we want a solution of the difficult and important problems of the *Khilafat* without the least suffering on our part. Non-co-operation is some sort of very easy *yajna*, it is penance in a small way, requiring a little self-sacrifice. I would certainly not think of it as any suffering if 20 or 25 thousand, or maybe a 100 or 150 thousand, gave up service to secure justice or in order, at any rate, not to be a party to injustice; nay, where the institution in question is well run I would look upon such suffering by employees as natural; in-

stead of running away from it, they should welcome it. I would not in the least be pained if thousands of men are ruined in the attempt to seek a just solution of a problem like the Khilafat. I would look upon it as a test of people's devotion to *dharma*. I believe that there can be no victory except through such suffering, and also that thousands of men suffering in that way cannot but win.

No measure of repression by the Government in consequence of non-co-operation can move or frighten me. I am convinced that the severer the repression the sooner will the problem be solved.

There is only one fear: lest people make a mistake, put themselves in the wrong and invite punishment, lest any individual yield to anger and assault or kill an official. If this happens, the pure law of self-sacrifice will be tarnished and to that extent the desired end will be delayed. Only the purest things can be offered in sacrifice. If Harishchandra had the least little evil in him and he had renounced a kingdom, we would not be singing his glory today. Christians, in regarding Jesus as the Saviour, attribute total perfection to him. Looking at the matter in the light, we see that we could start non-co-operation in full force immediately if we knew that there was not the slightest possibility of our being guilty of anything wrong in our agitation regarding the *Khilafat* or any other issue. If the movement has been divided into stages, it is because of doubts whether we would remain blameless. Considering all this, and considering that self-sacrifice is an inescapable duty if we are to ensure India's regeneration, we should entertain no fears at all about non-co-operation; on the contrary, we should realize that without some kind of *yajna* or *tapas* by way of non-co-operation, we shall succeed neither in solving the *Khilafat* problem, nor in securing justice for the Punjab nor in winning and retaining *swaraj*.

'Duty of Self-Sacrifice' (G.)

*Navajwan*, 20 June 1920

<sup>1</sup> Drink of the gods, conferring immortality

<sup>2</sup> Sacrifice

<sup>3</sup> The Absolute

<sup>4</sup> *Bhagavad Gita* IV 31

<sup>5</sup> In 1487

## 195. YAJNA AND SELF-HELP

A friend has asked me questions on some religious issues. I continually receive such questions, and feel some hesitation in answering them so often. But it does not seem proper not to answer them either, since I have thought about these matters and come to certain conclusions. I therefore answer the following questions to the best of my ability and understanding.

Q. What are your views about the *yajnas* which used to be performed in ancient times? Do such *yajnas* purify the air? Is there a place for them in our times? Some groups are reviving *yajnas*; will their revival be of any benefit?

*Yajna* is a beautiful and highly suggestive word. Its meaning, therefore, can change and expand with the growth of our knowledge and experience or with changing times. The word can be interpreted to mean worship, sacrifice or service of others. Understood in this sense, *yajna* always deserves to be revived. But the *yajnas* of various types, that is, rituals of various kinds described as *yajnas* in *shastras*, do not deserve to be, and in fact cannot be, revived. Some of these rituals are harmful, and it is also doubtful whether in Vedic times they were understood in the sense which we attach to them now. Whether or not this doubt is justified, some of these rituals are repugnant to our reason and moral sense. Anthropologists tell us that there were human sacrifices in old days. Can we conceive of such a sacrifice being performed now? Anyone who proposes to perform the horse-sacrifice would make himself an object of ridicule. We need not go into the question whether *yajnas* purify air, for it is irrelevant to ask, in connection with a religious ritual, whether it results in such a trivial benefit as the purification of air. Modern physical science can give us better help in that regard. The essential principles of *shastras* are one thing and the practices based on them another. The principles are the same at all times and in all places. But the practices based on them vary from age to age and country to country.

Q. It is generally believed that to be born as a human being is a rare privilege and that, therefore, we should occupy our time in

singing praises of God. If we fail to make the right use of our present opportunity, we shall once again have to go through the cycle of births in 84 lakhs of different species. What is the truth in this belief?

Kabir also says in a song:

Wake up, O brother, says Kabir,  
Else you are doomed to the round of eighty-four lakhs of births;  
You may be born a swine or a fowl,  
And will suffer their fate, my brother.  
What lesson should we learn from this?

I believe this to be quite true. One is born as a human being after going through the cycle of births in innumerable species, and *moksha* or complete deliverance from the pairs of opposites can be attained only through life in a human body. If in the ultimate analysis there is only one *atman*, its going through the cycle of countless species in the form of innumerable lives should not seem impossible or wonderful. Our reason, too, can accept the idea, and some persons even remember their past lives.

Q. Between a *yogi* rising to the state of *samadhi*<sup>1</sup> through *pranayama*<sup>2</sup> and one who acquires control of the senses, who attains higher spiritual good?

This question presupposes a contradiction between self-control and *yoga*. In truth, one of them is the cause of the other; or, rather, they are complements of each other. *Samadhi* without self-control is no better than the sleep of Kumbhakarna.<sup>3</sup> Without *samadhi*, again, self-control is difficult to attain. *Samadhi*, in this context, should be understood in a wide sense, not in the limited sense of the *hathayogi*'s<sup>4</sup> *samadhi*. In truth, this latter is not essential for attaining control of the senses. It may be a help, but in the present age ordinary *samadhi* is the best for us. Ordinary *samadhi* means the capacity to be absorbed in the chosen task. It should not be forgotten that yogic achievements are of no use if not accompanied by control of the senses.

Q. Suppose that a person believes in self-help, himself works in the fields and grows food-grains for his use, makes with his own hands farm implements, like the plough, does the carpenter's work, weaves



his own cloth, even builds his own house, in short produces by his own efforts everything which he requires and does not employ others' labour for that purpose. Would he be right or wrong to do this? What is your definition of a man of self-help?

Self-help means the ability to stand on one's own feet without help from others. This does not mean that one should be indifferent to such help, or decline it when offered or never desire it or ask for it. But a farmer who, though wanting and seeking others' help, can preserve his composure and self-respect when it is refused, is a man of self-help. A farmer who, though he can get others' help, himself attends to all the operations of tilling the land, sowing and reaping, himself makes the required implements, himself weaves cloth for his use from yarn spun by himself, stitches his own clothes, cooks his own food and labours to build a house for himself such a farmer is either stupid or self-conceited or is just a savage. Self-help necessarily implies the *yajna* of bodily labour, which means that everyone should do such work to earn his livelihood. Any person, therefore, who works for eight hours in the fields is entitled to the services of a weaver, a carpenter, a blacksmith and a mason. It is his duty to seek their services, and he will get them easily enough. In return, carpenters, blacksmiths and other artisans get food-grains produced by the farmer's labour. An eye which hopes to do without help from the hand does not practise self-help, it is just too proud. As the different limbs of our body practise self-help in regard to their own functions, and yet are of service to others because they help one another and dependent on others because they are helped by one another, so we, the thirty crore limbs of the body that is India, should follow the duty of self-help in our respective spheres of work and, to demonstrate that we are limbs of the same nation, exchange help with one another. Only then shall we have built up a nation and proved our claim to be patriots.

Q. For the purpose of marriage ceremonies, *sandhya*,<sup>5</sup> *yajna* rituals and prayers, Sanskrit verses are used in our age. The verses are recited by the person officiating on these occasions and those who have engaged him join him in reciting the verses without understanding their meaning. Sanskrit is no longer our mother tongue.

Many institutions ask the people to use that language for prayers, *sandhya*, *yajna* rituals, etc. But the people do not understand the language. How, then, can they concentrate attention on what is being recited? Sanskrit, moreover, is a difficult language. Learning the verses by heart and remembering their meanings seems to me, therefore, a double burden. When Sanskrit was people's mother tongue, all their work was done in it and that was but right. That is no longer the position now. It helps people to use their mother tongue for all their work, but our present practice is different. The religious ceremonies mentioned above are performed in Sanskrit among the general public.

My view is that Sanskrit should be used in all Hindu religious ceremonies. However good a translation, it cannot give us the meaning which lies in the sounds of certain words in the original. Moreover, by translating into regional languages, and remaining content with such translations, verses which belong to a language which has acquired a certain refinement over thousands of years and in which those verses have always been recited, we diminish the air of solemnity which attaches to them. But I have no doubt at all in my mind that the meaning of every verse and every step in the ceremony should be explained in their own language to the people for whose benefit they are being recited or performed. It is also my view that the education of every Hindu is incomplete without an elementary knowledge of Sanskrit. I simply cannot conceive the continued existence of Hinduism without a widespread knowledge of Sanskrit. The language has been made difficult by the type of curriculum we follow in teaching it, in itself it is not difficult at all. Even if it is, the practice of *dharma* is still more difficult and, therefore, to those who wish to follow it in life the means of doing so should seem easy, however difficult they may actually be.

'Some Questions On Religious Issues (G.)

*Navajivan*, 28 Mar. 1926

<sup>1</sup> A state of thought-free awareness

<sup>2</sup> Breath-control

<sup>3</sup> In the *Ramayana* He was Ravana's brother, and was asleep and awake by turns for six months at a stretch.

<sup>4</sup> A *yogi* who relies on certain physical techniques.

<sup>5</sup> Morning and evening prayers.

196, 147 A. WELFARE, AND SERVICE

Tuesday morning, Diwali,  
October 21, 1930

Chi. Narandas,

My blessings to all the friends there. My *Vandemataram* and due regards to everyone. May we be filled with greater spirit of service during the next year, and become fitter instruments and more awake to our duty in that regard.

We make frequent use of the word '*yajna*'. We have raised spinning to the rank of a daily *mahayajna*. It is therefore necessary to think out the various implications of the term '*yajna*'. '*Yajna*' means an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. 'Act' here must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thought and word, as well as deed. Others' embraces not only humanity, but all life. Therefore, and also from the standpoint of *ahimsa*, it is not a *yajna* to sacrifice lower animals even with a view to serving humanity. It does not matter that animal sacrifice is supposed to find a place in the Vedas. It is enough for us that such sacrifice cannot stand the fundamental tests of Truth and Non-violence. I readily admit my incompetence in Vedic scholarship. But the incompetence, so far as this subject is concerned, does not worry me because, even if the practice of animal sacrifice be proved to have been a feature of Vedic society, it can form no precedent for a votary of *ahimsa*.

From this definition of *yajna* it follows that a primary sacrifice must be an act which conduces the most to the welfare of the greatest number in the widest area, and which can be performed by the largest number of men and women with the least trouble. It will not, therefore, be a *yajna*, much less a *mahayajna*, to wish or to do ill to anyone else even in order to serve a so-called higher interest. And the *Gita* teaches, and experience testifies, that all action that cannot come under the category of *yajna* promotes bondage.

The world cannot subsist for a single moment without *yajna* in this sense and, therefore, the *Gita*, after having dealt with true wisdom in the second chapter, takes up in the third the

means of attaining it and declares in so many words that *yajna* came with Creation itself. This body, therefore, has been given us only in order that we may serve all Creation with it. And therefore, says the *Gita*, he who eats without offering *yajna* eats stolen food. Every single act of one who would lead a life of purity should be in the nature of *yajna*. *Yajna* having come to us with our birth, we are debtors all our lives and thus for ever bound to serve the universe. And even as a bondsman receives food, clothing and so on from the master whom he serves, so should we gratefully accept such gifts as may be assigned to us by the Lord of the universe. What we receive must be called a gift; for as debtors we are entitled to no consideration for the discharge of our obligations. Therefore we may not blame the Master if we fail to get it. Our body is His to be cherished or cast away according to His will. This is not a matter for complaint or even pity; on the contrary, it is a natural and even a pleasant and desirable state, if only we realize our proper place in God's scheme.

We do indeed need strong faith, if we would experience this supreme bliss. 'Do not worry in the least about yourself, leave all worry to God', this appears to be the commandment in all religions. This need not frighten anyone. He who devotes himself to service with a clear conscience will day by day grasp the necessity for it in greater measure and will continually grow richer in faith. The path of service can hardly be trodden by one who is not prepared to renounce self-interest and to recognize the conditions of his birth. Any service rendered by such a person will be tainted by selfishness. But, then, men of such utter selfishness are rare in this world. Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger and will make not only for our own happiness but also for that of the world at large.

Blessings from  
BAPU

## 197. YAJNA AND RENUNCIATION

Tuesday morning, October 28, 1930

Chi. Narandas,

I wrote about *yajna* last week, but feel like writing more about it. It will perhaps be worthwhile further to consider a principle which has been created along with mankind. *Yajna* is duty to be performed, or service to be rendered, all the twenty-four hours of the day, and hence a maxim like 'The powers of the good are always exercised for a benevolent purpose' is inappropriate, if benevolence has any taste of favour about it. To serve without desire is to favour not others, but ourselves even as in discharging a debt we serve only ourselves, lighten our burden and fulfil our duty. Again, not only the good, but all of us are bound to place our resources at the disposal of humanity. And if such is the law, as evidently it is, indulgence ceases to hold a place in life and gives way to renunciation. For human beings renunciation itself is enjoyment. This is what differentiates man from the beast. Some object that life thus understood becomes dull and devoid of art, and leaves no room for the householder. But I think in saying this they misinterpret the word 'renunciation'. Renunciation here does not mean abandoning the world and retiring into the forest.

The spirit of renunciation should rule all the activities of life. A householder does not cease to be one if he regards life as a duty rather than as an indulgence. A cobbler, a cultivator, a tradesman or a barber may be inspired in their work or activities either by the spirit of renunciation or merely by the desire for self-indulgence. A merchant who carries on his business in a spirit of sacrifice will have crores passing through his hands, but he will, if he follows the law, use his abilities for service. He will, therefore, not cheat or speculate, will lead a simple life, will not injure a living soul and will lose millions rather than harm anybody. Let no one run away with the idea that this type of merchant exists only in my imagination. Fortunately for the world, he does exist in the West as well as in the East. It is true such merchants may be counted on one's fingers but the type ceases to be imaginary as soon as even

one living specimen can be found to answer to it. All of us know of a philanthropic tailor in Wadhwan. I know of one such barber. Every one of us knows of such a weaver.<sup>1</sup> And if we go deeply into the matter, we shall come across men in every walk of life who lead dedicated lives. No doubt these sacrificers obtain their livelihood by their work. But livelihood is not their objective, but only a by-product of their vocation. Motilal was a tailor at first, and continued as a tailor afterwards. But his spirit was changed and his work was transmuted into worship. He began to think about the welfare of others and his life became artistic in the real sense of the term.

A life of sacrifice is the pinnacle of art and is full of true joy. Such life is the source of ever fresh springs of joy which never dry up and never satiate. *Yajna* is not *yajna* if one feels it to be burdensome or annoying. Self-indulgence leads to destruction and renunciation to immortality. Joy has no independent existence. It depends upon our attitude to life. One man will enjoy theatrical scenery, another the ever new scenes which unfold themselves in the sky. Joy, therefore, is a matter of education. We shall delight in things which we have been taught to delight in as children. And illustrations can be easily cited of different national tastes.

Again, many sacrificers imagine that they are free to receive from the people everything they need and many things they do not need, because they are rendering disinterested service. Directly this idea sways a man, he ceases to be a servant and becomes a tyrant over the people. One who would serve others will not waste a thought upon his own comforts, which he leaves to be attended to or neglected by his Master on high. He will not, therefore, encumber himself with everything that comes his way; he will take only what he strictly needs and leave the rest. He will be calm, free from anger and unruffled in mind even if he finds himself inconvenienced. His service, like virtue, is its own reward, and he will rest content with it.

Again, one dare not be negligent in service or be behind-hand with it. He who thinks that he must be diligent only in his personal business, and unpaid public business may be done in any way and at any time he chooses, has still to learn the very rudiments of the science of sacrifice. Voluntary service of others demands the best of which one is capable, and must

take precedence over service of self. In fact, the pure devotee consecrates himself to the service of humanity without any reservation whatever.

Blessings from  
BAPU

Letter to Narandas Gandhi (G.)  
MMU/I

<sup>1</sup> The allusion probably is to Kabir

## § 4. *Aparigraha* and Non-Possession

### 198. THE IDEAL OF *APARIGRAHA*

Ashram, Sabarmati,  
Friday, April 30, 1926

Bhaishri Hasam Hirji,

Now I have another letter from you before I could reply to your first. I will answer the main question in your first letter through *Navajwan* when I get time. I will reply to your second letter here.

*Aparigraha* is an ideal condition. It can be said that an ideal is never realized perfectly. But we should not lower our ideal on this account. No one has ever been able to draw the ideal straight line of geometry but we may not, for that reason, change its definition. If we draw a straight line, keeping the ideal one in our view, we shall succeed in drawing a line which will serve our purpose. But if we modify the definition, we will be like a boat without the rudder. There is nothing wrong with money as a piece of metal; evil comes through its use. Keeping this in mind, we should sincerely try to realize the ideal of *aparigraha* as best as we can. Let us now examine the instances which you have imagined. The world will lose nothing if the rich give up their wealth voluntarily; on the contrary, it will benefit by their action, because a new and powerful force is generated as a result of a sincere act of *aparigraha*. No one can act in such matters mechanically. He

alone who feels a spontaneous urge in his heart will act, and will deserve credit for his action. There is no danger or possibility of the entire world acting upon the ideal of *aparigraha*. But assuming that it does, I have no doubt that it will find no difficulty in maintaining itself. There are people in this world who do not stock anything to meet their needs even for one day. You need not believe that such persons would starve if there were not in the world other people who stored things.

Just as in the law enforced by governments a crime does not cease to be a crime for being committed unintentionally, so also a violation of divine law committed in ignorance does not cease to be a violation. Adultery committed under the influence of alcohol is none the less the same. 'To ask for forgiveness' and 'to receive forgiveness' are beautiful ideas. I act on both the principles. But I have always believed that forgiveness in this sense does not mean what is commonly understood by it. A sincere desire to be forgiven increases our humility; we are able to see our weakness, and this knowledge gives us the strength to be good. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others have employed innumerable epithets to describe God, but they are all products of our own imagination. God is without attributes and beyond all qualification. But again I am speaking about the ideal; if, however, we do not understand the ideal and seriously believe that God is subject to all the epithets with which we describe Him, He would be like us, an embodiment of errors. We should, therefore, know Him as stainless and without form, and then we may heap on Him as many epithets as we choose, for that is the only language which He has given us. Apart from this, we cannot escape the fruits of our action. This is the universal law and therein lies His mercy. This world would not endure even for one moment if He were to keep amending His laws and commandments, as we do either to favour some or correct an error which might have been noticed. The Reality which we call God is a mysterious, indescribable and unique power. If we cannot comprehend Him with our mind, how can our poor speech describe Him?



## 199. ERASING 'I' AND 'MINE'

The following condensed report of Sjt. Satis Chandra Mukerjee's speech delivered at a peace meeting the other day at Darbhanga will be read with interest and profit . . .<sup>1</sup>

If we could erase the 'I's' and the 'Mine's' from religion, politics, economics, etc., we shall soon be free and bring heaven upon earth.

'The Curse of "I" and "Mine"'

*Young India*, 23 Sept. 1926

<sup>1</sup> The writer's thesis was that the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' was responsible for much of the communal intolerance and violence in the country, and that, indeed, a true understanding of all religions was possible only through regard for the universal virtues—Truth, Non-violence, etc.

## 200. SELF-SURRENDER

Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati,  
July 11, 1928

My Dear Shankaran,

I have your letter and the cheque sent to Chhaganlal Joshi. The names will appear in due course.

There is no breach of *asteya*<sup>1</sup> when the donor's consent is obtained for the use of his donation for a cause other than the one for which it was originally meant.

On the principle that a labourer is worthy of his hire, a worker may be considered to have reduced his wants to nil when he is satisfied with the minimum of food and clothing and accommodation and then too if he makes no condition that he should be fed and clothed against service. The institution that takes work from him will feed him and clothe him for its own sake. One who has surrendered himself completely will cheerfully face starvation, if starvation is to be his lot. After all self-surrender is a mental attitude. The millions who starve helplessly have surrendered nothing because their minds do not co-operate with their enforced starvation.

I am sending you this letter before knowing your new address. I hope you will receive it

Letter to Shankaran  
SN 13469

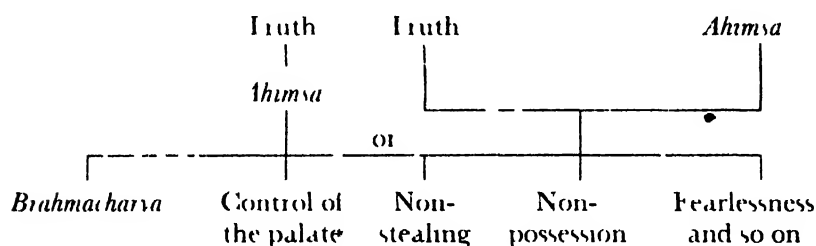
<sup>1</sup> Non-stealing

## 201 157711 NON-STEALING

Yeravda Mandir,  
Tuesday morning, August 19, 1930

Chi. Narandas,

We now come to the observance of non-stealing. On deeper reflection we see that all observances are implicit in Truth and *ahimsa* or truth alone. This can be expressed thus:



*Ahimsa* may be deduced from Truth, or may be paired with Truth. Truth and *ahimsa* are one and the same thing. I am partial to Truth, however. In the final analysis there can only be a single reality. The highest Truth stands by itself. Truth is the end, *ahimsa* is the means thereto. We know what *ahimsa* or non-violence is, although we find it difficult to follow the law of love. But as for Truth, we know only a fraction of it. Perfect knowledge of Truth is difficult of attainment for man even like the perfect practice of non-violence.

*Asteya* means non-stealing.

It is impossible that a person should steal and simultaneously claim to know Truth or cherish love. Yet every one of us is consciously or unconsciously, more or less, guilty of theft. We may steal not only what belongs to others, but also what belongs to ourselves, as is done, for instance, by a father who eats something secretly, keeping his children in the dark about

it. The Ashram kitchen-stores are our common property, but one who secretly removes a single crystal of sugar from it stamps himself a thief. A child who takes another's pen steals. It is theft to take anything belonging to another without his permission, even if it be with his knowledge. It is equally theft to take something in the belief that it is nobody's property. Things found on the roadside belong to the ruler or the local authority. Anything found near the Ashram must be handed over to the secretary, who in his turn will pass it on to the police if it is not Ashram property. Thus far it is pretty smooth sailing. But the observance of non-stealing goes very much farther. It is theft to take something from another even with his permission if we have no real need of it. We should not receive any single thing that we do not need. Theft of this description generally has food for its object. It is theft for me to take any fruit that I do not need, or to take it in a larger quantity than is necessary. We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants. One who follows the observance of non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his wants. Much of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principle of non-stealing.

Theft thus far considered may be termed external or physical theft. There is, besides, another kind of theft, subtler and far more degrading to the human spirit. It is theft mentally to desire acquisition of anything belonging to others, or to cast a greedy eye on it. It is mental theft if anyone, whether a grown-up person or a child, feels tempted by the sight of an attractive thing. One who takes no food, physically speaking, is generally said to be fasting, but he is guilty of theft as well as a breach of his fast if he gives himself up to a mental contemplation of pleasure when he sees others taking their meals. He is similarly guilty if, during his fast, he is continually planning the varied menu he will have after breaking the fast. One who observes the principle of non-stealing will refuse to bother himself about things to be acquired in future. This evil anxiety for the future will be found at the root of many a theft. Today we only desire possession of a thing; tomorrow

we shall begin to adopt measures, straight if possible, crooked when thought necessary, to acquire its possession. Ideas may be stolen no less than material things. One who egotistically claims to have originated some good idea, which, really speaking, did not originate with him, is guilty of a theft of ideas. Many learned men have committed such theft in the course of world history, and plagiarism is by no means uncommon even today. Supposing, for instance, that I see a new type of spinning-wheel in Andhra and manufacture a similar wheel in the Ashram, passing it off as my own invention, I practise untruth and am clearly guilty of stealing another's invention.

One who takes up the observance of non-stealing has, therefore, to be humble, thoughtful, vigilant and in habits simple. I have written the Ashram letters today under much pressure of time. Motilalji and others are here and I spent practically the whole of the last week in discussions with them. Even now I must give some time to them. I could, therefore, take up writing letters only yesterday evening after the prayers and started writing this after the morning prayers today. There are, therefore, the fewest letters this time and I have made them as short as I could. You will read about ...behn in my letters to Gangabehn and Bhansali. Be firm and go on doing what you think proper. My immediate reaction is that, if ...behn's mind has become steady and recovered its purity, we can condone her violation of the pledge to go away and live outside the Ashram. The chief thing to consider now is how to help her to overcome her passion and, on the other hand, to safeguard her freedom.

Women have been so completely suppressed that in their helplessness they cannot even think. The Ashram, therefore, should adopt a very liberal attitude towards them. This involves many risks. We should take them if we wish to serve women. Act upon this view within the limits of your capacity. When I see ...behn's face in my mind's eye, I see nothing but innocence and fear on it. She is not the cause of her fall. After hearing about this misconduct, I can see the signs of impurity on the face of ... I cannot see such signs on the face of ...behn. What I see on her face is simplicity. And ignorance, of course. She can almost be compared to Rishyashringa. There is of course this important difference that ...behn has had the ex-

perience of passion, whereas Rishyashringa had never had such experience. The poet, however, has described him as if he was only waiting for a touch. That is the condition of countless seemingly innocent men and women today. 'Desire is aroused by coming together.' Hence we have no right to condemn anyone. Our duty, plainly, is to show love and to exercise more vigilance in regard to ourselves. I have written enough today.

Blessings from  
BAPU

Letter to Narandas Gandhi (G)  
MMU/I

## 202. THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-POSSESSION

Yeravda Mandir,  
Tuesday morning, August 26, 1930

Chi Narandas,

Non-possession is allied to non-stealing. A thing not originally stolen must nevertheless be classified as stolen property if we possess it without needing it. Possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after truth, a follower of the law of love, cannot hold anything against tomorrow. God never stores for the morrow; He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If, therefore, we repose faith in His providence, we should be assured that He will give us every day our daily bread, meaning everything we require. Saints and men of faith have always found justification for it from their experience. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions starve to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The

poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multi-millionaire. The poor are not content if they get their daily needs. They have a right, however, to get enough for their daily needs and it is the duty of society to help them to satisfy them. The rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich.

Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession requires that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread, but it will be God's business, and not his, to provide it. Only very very few, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly before us, and in the light thereof critically examine our possessions and try to reduce them. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service. Judging by this criterion, we find that in the Ashram we possess many things the necessity for which cannot be proved, and we thus tempt our neighbours to steal. If people try, they can reduce their wants and, as the latter diminish, they become happier, more peaceful and healthier. From the standpoint of pure truth, the body, too, is a possession. It has been truly said that desire for enjoyment creates bodies for the soul and sustains them. When this desire vanishes, there remains no further need for the body and man is free from the vicious cycle of births and deaths. The soul is omnipresent; why should she care to be confined within the cage-like body, or do evil and even kill for the sake of that cage? We thus arrive at the ideal of total renunciation and learn the use of the body for the purposes of service so long as it exists, so much so that service, and not bread, becomes for us the staff of life. We eat and drink, sleep and wake, for service alone. Such an attitude of mind brings us real happiness and the beatific vision in the fulness of time. Let us all examine ourselves from this standpoint.

We should remember that non-possession is a principle applicable to thoughts as well as to things. A man who fills his brain with useless knowledge violates that inestimable principle. Thoughts which turn us away from God or do not turn us towards Him are unnecessary possessions and constitute impediments in our way. In this connection we may consider the definition of knowledge contained in Chapter XIII of the *Gita*. We are there told that humility, *amanutvam*, etc., constitute knowledge and that all the rest is ignorance. If this is true — and there is no doubt that it is true — much that we hug today as knowledge is ignorance pure and simple, and therefore only does us harm instead of conferring any benefit. It makes the mind wander and even reduces it to a vacuity, and discontent flourishes in endless ramifications of evil. Needless to say, this is not a plea for inertia. Every moment of our life should be filled with mental or physical activity, but that activity should be *sattvik*, tending towards truth. One who has consecrated his life to service cannot be idle for a single moment. But we have to learn to distinguish between good activity and evil activity. This discernment goes naturally with a single-minded devotion to service.

Blessings from  
BAPU

Letter to Narandas Gandhi G 1  
MMU/I

### 203. NON-POSSESSION AND AHIMSA

Sevagram,  
May 21, 1940

Bhai Prithvi Singh,

I have your three letters. You are not at all to blame in regard to Prabhakumari's case. But the case proves that it is necessary to be alert in all matters. *Ahimsa* requires non-possession, both mental and physical, and truth requires silence. If this is accepted, it will become easy to distinguish between violent and non-violent actions in all important matters.

I find your case about going to Ghogha rather weak. All athletes would endure the hardships you mention. I do not believe, from what you describe, that any very great shock is being given to reason. But the truth will soon be known. We will know how much those who attended benefited. I have spent myself in training people in *ahimsa* but I have not wholly succeeded in cultivating it myself or in helping others to cultivate it. I am now looking to you

Blessings from  
BAPU

Letter to Prithvi Singh (G)  
GW 2950

## 204 POSSESSIONS AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Savagram  
February 9, 1942

Q. Why can't you see that whilst there is possession it must be defended against all odds? Therefore your insistence that violence should be eschewed in all circumstances is utterly unworkable and absurd. I think non-violence is possible only for select individuals.

A. This question has been answered often enough in some form or other in these columns as also in those of *Young India*. But it is an evergreen. I must answer it as often as it is put, especially when it comes from an earnest seeker as this one does. I claim that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over mankind lives and men retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another. If they had not done so, only the fewest and the most ferocious would have survived. But such is not the case. Families are bound together by ties of love, and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations. Only they do not recognize the supremacy of the law of non-violence. It follows, therefore, that they have not investigated its vast possibilities. Hitherto out of sheer inertia, shall



I say, we have taken it for granted that complete non-violence is possible only for the few who take the vow of non-possession and the allied abstinences

Whilst it is true that the votaries alone can carry on research work and declare from time to time the new possibilities of the great eternal law governing man, if it is the law, it must hold good for all. The many failures we see are not of the law but of the followers, many of whom do not even know that they are under that law willv-nilly. When a mother dies for her child she unknowingly obeys the law. I have been pleading for the past fifty years for a conscious acceptance of the law and its zealous practice even in the face of failures. Fifty years' work has shown marvellous results and strengthened my faith. I do claim that by constant practice we shall come to a state of things when lawful possession will command universal and voluntary respect. No doubt such possession will not be tainted. It will not be an insolent demonstration of the inequalities that surround us everywhere. Nor need the problem of unjust and unlawful possessions appal the votary of non-violence. He has at his disposal the non-violent weapon of *satyagraha* and non-co-operation which hitherto has been found to be a complete substitute of violence whenever it has been applied honestly in sufficient measure. I have never claimed to present the complete science of non-violence. It does not lend itself to such treatment. So far as I know no single physical science does, not even the very precise science of mathematics. I am but a seeker, and I have fellow-seekers like the questioner whom I invite to accompany me in the very difficult but equally fascinating search.

Question Box

*Harijan* 22 Feb 1942

## 205 GIVING UNCONDITIONALLY

July 28, 1947

If we give anything away there should be no condition attached to the gift. Only then will the giving be pure. I have

observed that most disputes in the world arise from 'agreements' and 'conditions'. I, therefore, suggest that it will be more befitting if your donation to the institution is unconditional.

'A Letter' (G.)

*Bihar Pachhi Dulhi*, p. 434

## 206. TEST OF NON-ATTACHMENT

November 5, 1947

... If self-control has taken root in one's heart, why should one wear saffron robes or withdraw oneself into the forests? And one whose heart is not firm is not likely to gain anything whether he goes to a forest or anywhere else. I believe that the man who observes self-control in thought, word and deed in the midst of the world is verily a great ascetic. If things do not bind us, if we are not attached to things even when they are easily available, that, according to me, is a greater test of our detachment than mere withdrawal to a lonely forest.

Fragment of a Letter (G.)

*Dulhman Gandhiji*, Vol. I, p. 200

## § 5. Rights and Duties

### 207. THE DUTY OF A LAWYER

[25 November 1927]

I am glad you have put this question.<sup>1</sup> For, I may say that if I cannot speak on this subject with authority, no one else can. For throughout my career at the bar I never once departed from the strictest truth and honesty.

Well, then, the first thing which you must always bear in mind, if you would spiritualize the practice of law, is not to make your profession subservient to the interests of your purse,

as is unfortunately but too often the case at present, but to use your profession for the service of your country. There are instances of eminent lawyers in all countries who led a life of self-sacrifice, who devoted their brilliant legal talents entirely to the service of their country although it spelt almost pauperism for them. In India you have the instance of the late Mana Mohan Ghose. He took up the fight against the indigo planters and served his poor clients at the cost of his health, even at the risk of his life, without charging them a single pie for his labours. He was a most brilliant lawyer, yet he was a great philanthropist. That is an example that you should have before you. Or better still you can follow Ruskin's precept given in his book *Unto This Last*. 'Why should a lawyer charge fifteen pounds for his work,' he asks, 'whilst a carpenter for instance hardly gets as many shillings for his work?' The fees charged by lawyers are unconscionable everywhere. I confess, I myself have charged what I would now call high fees. But even whilst I was engaged in my practice, let me tell you I never let my profession stand in the way of my public service.

And there is another thing which I would like to warn you against. In England, in South Africa, almost everywhere, I have found that in the practice of their profession lawyers are consciously or unconsciously led into untruth for the sake of their clients. An eminent English lawyer has gone so far as to say that it may even be the duty of a lawyer to defend a client whom he knows to be guilty. There I disagree. The duty of a lawyer is always to place before the judges, and to help them to arrive at, the truth, never to prove the guilty as innocent. It is up to you to maintain the dignity of your profession. If you fail in your duty what shall become of the other professions? You, young men, claiming as you have just done to be the fathers of tomorrow, should be the salt of the nation. If the salt loses its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Speech to Law Students, Colombo  
*With Gandhi in Ceylon*, pp. 35-7

<sup>1</sup> How to spiritualize the legal profession?

## 208. THE WELFARE OF WORKERS

May 1, 1928

Perhaps it is quite appropriate that this creche is being opened by one who calls himself a labourer, though let me confess to you that it was not without some hesitation that I accepted the invitation when it was brought to me by Sheth Kasturbhai,<sup>1</sup> not because I did not like the object, but because I was so preoccupied, and nothing would have pleased me better than that you should have got this function performed by someone more deserving than myself, preferably a mill-owner. But my regard for Sheth Kasturbhai prevailed and I had to yield.

When I established my Ashram in Ahmedabad the consideration which weighed with me was not merely that it was the capital of Gujarat, nor that it was a busy commercial centre but that it was a great centre of textile industry and I felt that I could reasonably count on the help of the mill-agents and be able to render some service to the city. Today I am glad to be able to say that these expectations of mine have not been altogether unfulfilled. Though I have a recollection of some bitter experiences I have also a number of sweet recollections of my relations with the mill-owners. I have not yet given up hope of Ahmedabad. I still expect great things of it. It has much to accomplish yet, and among other things, speaking as a labourer myself, and as one who has tried to enter into the innermost feelings of the working class, I say that Ahmedabad has much to do yet towards the amelioration of the condition of the labouring class.

My connection with the labour of this place is not of yesterday. It is as old as my first coming to this city, and so I make bold to tell you that you have not yet done your part towards your labouring population. In some cases the labourers have not been provided with even the primary amenities of life. There are exceptions, however. Some mill-owners have made some effort in the direction, and the present one is an instance in point.

The sentiments about the welfare of the mill-hands that Sheth Kasturbhai has just now uttered before you reflect credit on him and the city of Ahmedabad. Sheth Kasturbhai was

delighted with Port Sunlight, and rightly. But Port Sunlight cannot be our ideal. Messrs Lever Bros. represent to my mind the minimum standard that an employer must do for his employees. To do less would be a discredit. But we cannot afford to rest content with that. We must think in terms of our own civilization, and if the picture presented to us in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* of the social conditions prevailing in the ancient times be correct, our ideal would seem to go much farther than Port Sunlight. I have read a lot of literature about Port Sunlight, and I am an ardent admirer of their welfare work, but I maintain that ours is a higher ideal. In the West there is still a watertight division between the employer and the employees. I know it is impertinent to talk of our ideal, while the curse of untouchability still stalks through the land. But I should be untrue to myself and be failing in my duty to you if I did not place before you what I regard as the highest ideal.

The relation between mill-agents and mill-hands ought to be one of father and children or as between blood-brothers. I have often heard the mill-owners of Ahmedabad refer to themselves as 'masters' and their employees as their servants. Such loose talk should be out of fashion in a place like Ahmedabad, which prides itself on its love of religion and love of *ahimsa*. For that attitude is a negation of *ahimsa*, inasmuch as our ideal demands that all our power, all our wealth and all our brains should be devoted solely to the welfare of those who through their own ignorance and our false notions of things are styled labourers or 'servants'. What I expect of you, therefore, is that you should hold all your riches as a trust to be used solely in the interests of those who sweat for you, and to whose industry and labour you owe all your position and prosperity. I want you to make your labourers co-partners of your wealth. I do not mean to suggest that unless you legally bind yourselves to do all that, there should be a labour insurrection. The only sanction that I can think of in this connection is of mutual love and regard as between father and son, not of law. If only you make it a rule to respect these mutual obligations of love, there would be an end to all labour disputes, the workers would no longer feel the need for organizing themselves into unions. Under the ideal contemplated by me, there would be

nothing left for our Anasuyabehn and Shankerlals to do; their occupation would be gone. But that cannot happen until there is a single mill-hand who does not regard the mill in which he works as his own, who complains of sweating and overwork, and who therefore nurses in his breast nothing but ill will towards his employers.

And where is the difficulty?

You have told us and it is recognized everywhere that the mill-owners stand only to gain by doing all this. Messrs Lever Bros. lost nothing by doing all that they did. They felt so encouraged that they even tried to create another Port Sunlight in Natal. As our experience gradually broadens we are beginning to see more and more clearly that the more we give to our workers the more we stand to gain. From the moment your men come to realize that the mills are theirs, no less than yours, they will begin to feel towards you as blood-brothers, there would be no question of their acting against the common interest and the need for having a heavy supervisory establishment over them.

You have given me credit for keeping the city of Ahmedabad free from a labour upheaval such as Bombay is at present passing through. Well, I cannot quite disclaim that credit, for does anyone among you for a moment doubt that things would have been otherwise here, but for the work that Shrimati Anasuyabehn and Sjt. Shankerlal have been doing? It is true perhaps that you the mill owners of Ahmedabad are more tactful than the Bombay mill-owners. In case of an upheaval you do not employ hooligans to crush your men as some employers in the West do, and I fancy that you have deliberately abjured that weapon of suppressing the aspirations of labour. My critics tell me that this is all moonshine, and that you would not hesitate to resort to such means, if you could. But I believe that they are mistaken and I want you to prove by your conduct that they are mistaken. I hope you will help to bring near the time when the sort of work that Sjt. Banker and Shrimati Anasuyabehn are doing would be rendered needless, and pending that consummation give them all the help, all the encouragement that they need in their work.

Now perhaps you understand why I have dared to appropriate a little credit for the peace that prevails here today. It

belongs not to me but to Shrimati Anasuyabehn and Sjt Shankerlal Banker. They live, move and have their being among the labourers, which I am unable to do. If you aid the efforts of these friends you will find there will not be much need left for erecting creches like this one or for providing medical relief. I do not wish to detract from the merit of these efforts of yours, but I ask you whether any well-to-do man would care to send his children to a creche like this. Our endeavour should be to bring about a state of things under which there would be no occasion for a mill-hand's baby to be torn from its mother, and when a factory hand's child would receive the same opportunities for education that our own children have.

Speech at Opening of Creche, Ahmedabad  
*Young India* 10 May 1928

<sup>1</sup> Kasturbhai Lalbhai Agent, Rupar Manufacturing Company had requested Gandhi to perform the opening ceremony.

## 209 WORK, WEALTH, AND GRIEF

Questions asked and my answers to them are given below.

Q Do you accept the duty of bread labour expounded by Tolstoy?

A Yes, certainly.

Q Do you expect that every person should do all his work himself?

A I do not expect it and I do not think it practicable, Tolstoy too did not consider this essential. Man's dependence is no less than his independence. So long as he remains in society, and remain he must, he has to curtail his independence to fit into that of others, that is, society. Therefore, it can only be said that each person, as far as it is possible, must do his work himself, that is to say, I may fill a mug for my use, but may not dig a well myself. Not to fill the mug is pride, to plan or begin digging a well is stupidity. One must,

therefore, exercise discretion in deciding whether a task is to be done by oneself or with the help of others.

Q. Do you wish that all should earn their livelihood by the sweat of the brow?

A. Certainly Everyone does not do so and that is why dire poverty has arisen in the world and especially so in India. This is also the main cause of ill health and the immense greed for acquisition of wealth. If all earned their livelihood by physical work, greed would decrease and much of the power to acquire wealth would weaken automatically. If physical labour is done, ill health will almost disappear and the greatest gain will be the complete obliteration of the distinction between high and low in society.

'*Varnadharma* and Duty of Labour' T. H.  
*Hindi Navajwan*, 6 Feb. 1930

## 210. UNIVERSAL DUTY OF MANUAL LABOUR

Q. Is not the division of labour under *varnashrama dharma* sufficient for the development and welfare of humanity? Which do you value more—*varnadharma* or duty of labour?

A. The purport of this question is that *varnadharma* and duty of labour are incompatible obligations. In fact they are not. Both are concurrent and imperative. *Varnadharma* pertains to the society and duty of labour pertains to the individual. The sages divided society into four sections for its welfare and thereby attempted to root out rivalry which is fatal to society. Therefore they made one *varna* responsible for the growth of knowledge in society, the second responsible for the protection of life and property in society, the third for trade in society, and the fourth for service to society. All the four functions were and are equally essential; therefore there was no reason to consider one high and the other low. Adverting to the



equilibrium of scales Maharshi Vyas has indeed said that each individual by performing the duties of his own *varna* acquires fitness for salvation; whereas mutual rivalry and distinctions of high and low bring about ruin. *Varnadharma* does not in the least imply that any *varna* is exempt from manual labour. The duty of labour is incumbent on every person belonging to every *varna*. The *Brahmin* also had to approach his *guru* with firewood in his hands, that is to say, he also had to go into the forest and glean firewood and tend cattle. This work he did for himself and his family, not for society. Only children and cripples were exempt from such manual work.

The doctrine of manual labour for a living which Tolstoy has expounded is a corollary of the duty of labour. Tolstoy felt that if everyone had to do manual work then it means that man must earn his bread by manual labour, never by mental work. In *varnadharma* the work of each *varna* was for the welfare of society. Livelihood was not the motive. Gain or no gain, the *Kshatriya* had to defend the people. The *Brahmin* had to impart knowledge whether he received alms or not. The *Vaishya* had to farm and tend cattle whether he earned money or not. But Tolstoy's doctrine that every person must do manual work for a living is perfectly true. We come across distressing disparities in the world today because this universal duty has been neglected or forgotten. Disparities will always be there, but like the several leaves of a tree they will look beautiful and pleasant. In the pure *varnadharma* disparity is no doubt there, and when it was in its pure form, it was pleasing, peaceful and pretty. But when several people use their talents for amassing wealth, distressing disparities are created. Just as, if a teacher (*Brahmin*), a soldier (*Kshatriya*), a businessman (*Vaishya*) and a carpenter (*Shudra*) follow their professions for amassing wealth, not for the welfare of society, then *varnadharma* is destroyed. Because in matters of duty there can be no room whatever for amassing wealth. In society there is need for teachers, lawyers, doctors, soldiers and others. But when they work for selfish ends they no longer are protectors of society but become parasites on society.

The *Gita*, III. 10, has expounded a great principle where it says:

‘Together with sacrifice did the Lord of beings create, of

old, mankind, declaring: By this shall ye increase; may this be to you the giver of all your desires.'

Now we can clearly comprehend the etymology of the word *yajna*. The meaning of *yajna* is manual work and this is the first and foremost act of worship of God. He has given us bodies. Without food the body cannot exist and without labour food cannot be produced. That is why manual labour has become a universal duty. This duty of labour is not Tolstoy's alone but of the whole world. Ignorance of this great *yajna* has led to the worship of Mammon in the world and intelligent people have used their talents to exploit others. It is clear that God is not covetous. Being all powerful, He creates every day only as much food as is sufficient for every human being or living creature. Not knowing this great truth, several people indulge in all kinds of luxuries and thereby starve many others. If they could give up this greed and work for their living, and eat enough to meet their needs, the poverty that we find today will vanish. I hope the interrogator would now see that *varnadharma* and duty of labour are concurrent, complementary and essential.

'*Varnadharma* and Duty of Labour II' H  
*Hindi Navajwan*, 13 Feb. 1930,

## 211 MANUAL AND MENTAL WORK

Q. It is of course good to find the virtues of all the four *varnas* in any one individual but can the majority of human beings acquire them all and is it proper to place this ideal before society?

A. Many virtues and functions are common to all *varnas* and ought to be so, but it is neither necessary nor possible for everyone to have all the virtues of all the *varnas*.

Q. If Tolstoy's duty of labour is universally accepted will it not be difficult for poets like Kabir and Rabindra to live in this world? And would this not be a misfortune for the world?

A. Acceptance of the duty of labour is not a denial of Kabir and Rabindranath; on the other hand it is capable of making the poetry of both more forceful and radiant. Manual labour does not weaken the mental faculty; on the contrary, it nourishes it. The difference merely is that the votary of manual labour will never earn a living by only writing poetry nor will he give up manual labour altogether. Kabir was, of course, an advocate of manual labour. He never earned a penny by composing religious songs and hymns. He earned his living as a weaver of cloth. Propagation of religion and morality had become his nature or hobby. Rabindranath is a great poet of this age because he does not earn his living by writing poetry. Whatever he earns by writing poetry is all donated to his institution. He lives by the income from his estates. I do not know how far he believes in the duty of labour; this I do know, that he certainly does not despise it. We learn from history that ancient poets or sages had accepted the duty of labour even if it might have been implicitly. As a result, their benedictions are with us even today.

Q. According to the doctrine of the duty of labour, Jesus, Buddha and Tolstoy himself are blameworthy. Tolstoy's wife herself has said that beyond writing books he could do nothing else. He might have learnt carpentry and some other manual work only to become a laughing-stock; but this does not satisfy Tolstoy's concept of the duty of labour. Is it not therefore necessary to examine it very carefully?

A. This view takes no note of history. Jesus was a carpenter. He never used his intellect to earn his livelihood. We do not know how much manual work Buddha did before he attained wisdom. Yet, we know this much, that he did not propagate religion for securing his livelihood. He lived on charity. That could not militate against the duty of labour. A roving ascetic has to do a lot of manual work. Now, to come to Tolstoy, what his wife has said is true but it is not the whole truth. After the change in his outlook Tolstoy never took for himself the income from his books. Although he had property worth millions, he lived like a guest in his own house. After the attainment of wisdom, he worked eight hours a day and earned his wages. Sometimes he worked in the field and sometimes he made shoes at home. Although he did not earn much

by doing such work, still he earned enough to feed himself. Tolstoy strove hard to practise what he preached. This was characteristic of him. The sum and substance of all this discussion is that the duty which the ancients observed themselves and which the majority in the world discharges even today has been presented to the world in an explicit manner by him. In fact, this doctrine was not Tolstoy's original idea; it was thought of by a great Russian writer by name Bondaref. Tolstoy endorsed it and proclaimed it to the world.

'*Varnadharma and Duty of Labour* III' H 1

*Hindi Narajivan*, 20 Feb 1930

## 212. MONEY, GREED, AND SLAVERY

Q Tolstoy has written 'Money and slavery are one and the same thing. Their object is the same and their outcome is also alike. Money is a new and frightful image of slavery and like the ancient personal bondage, it degrades and depraves the slave as well as the master. That is not all. It is worse, because it destroys the human affection which subsisted between master and slave in the ancient form of personal slavery.'

Do you support this view? Can money never become a harmless medium of exchange? If so, how? And if not, why not?

A I am not aware that Tolstoy wrote what the questioner quotes as the former's statement. Slavery and money do not belong to the same class and therefore they cannot be compared. Slavery is a status and always abhorrent. Money is only a medium for one's dealings with the world. However powerful a medium it may be, it is just as likely to be beneficial as to be harmful. This same can be said of many other material things. Under every circumstance and in some form or other, the need for money will surely exist. Slavery never was and never could be necessary. We must understand the meaning of money here. When I barter grain for shoes, then, as the grain is the medium of exchange for shoes, it becomes money. But because barter by grain becomes difficult for a large number of people, a bit of metal or paper is used to

represent it. This metal or paper is money. There can be no objection to this. But when a person hoards such paper, metal or grain beyond his needs, it leads to evil. It is therefore clear that money by itself is not harmful, but greed for it is harmful. As opposed to this, slavery is a sign of greed. It is wrong and greedy to make a man a slave, but possession of money becomes wrong only when it is held in excess.

However, the man who believes in *varnadharma* is contented and therefore will not be greedy of wealth. And the man who believes in the duty of labour will never make another a slave.

'*Varnadharma* and Duty of Labour IV' H.  
*Hindi Navajivan*, 27 Feb 1930

### 213. THE LAW OF BREAD LABOUR

Brahma created his people with the duty of sacrifice laid upon them and said: 'By this do you flourish. Let it be the fulfiller of all your desires.' He who eats without performing this sacrifice eats stolen bread.

Thus says the *Gita*. 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow', says the Bible. Sacrifices may be of many kinds. One of them may well be bread labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease, and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of a sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal.

If we did so, our wants would be minimized, our food would

be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relish from the productions of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took were superfluities.

May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. 'The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's' perhaps applies here well.

Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal State, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man.

Return to the villages means a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. But says the critic, 'millions of India's children are today living in the villages and yet they are living a life of semi-starvation'. This, alas, is but too true. Fortunately we know that theirs is not voluntary obedience. They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could, and even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it. Compulsory obedience to a master is a state of slavery, willing obedience to one's father is the glory of sonship. Similarly, compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold. The Village Industries Association is an experiment in willing bread labour.

'Duty of Bread Labour'

*Haryan*, 29 June 1935

## 214. VARNADHARMA

May 6, 1939

I fully endorse your views about *varnadharma*. But putting it into practice is a really complicated matter. Will you please elucidate?

Today castes have become mongrelized. *Varnas* have disappeared. In such a situation how should those believing in the *varnas* proceed? This is what this question implies. Today there is only one *varna*. Call it the *Shudra varna*. We cannot say *Atishudra* since we do not believe in untouchability. We do not believe in a fifth *varna*. Hence only the fourth *varna*, that is, *Shudra* is left. Let all of us consider that we are *Shudras*. Then there will be no feeling of high or low left. Envy and discrimination will automatically disappear. This is the only thing that would be fitting in the prevailing atmosphere. *Brahmins* are a rarity these days. Who possesses learning which is unique and will make for the welfare of the world? And where is the man who will expect nothing for that learning? As for the *Kshatriyas* there are none left in India. If there had been any, the country would not have lost its freedom. India would not remain in her present condition if great learning and great valour could be found here. So far as the *Vaishyas* are concerned, *Vaishyadharma* is a *varnadharma*. It is not merely an occupation to earn money. It is a duty, not a right. They should use their wealth for the benefit of society. Many of the occupations which the *Barnas* follow are immoral. Earning too much money is also immoral. Many of these occupations cannot be included in *varnadharma*. This means that today even the *Vaishyas* are not there. Only some money-grubbing professional people are left. Three *varnas* have thus passed out.

That leaves us the *Shudras*. They possess no learning. They consider themselves slaves. They do not serve with knowledge. That is to say, there are not really even *Shudras* left in India. In other words, we cannot say that even one of the four *varnas* is still extant. Even so, since we believe in *varnadharma*, let us accept the *dharma* of service. Let us adopt *Shudradharma*. This does not mean that we should discard learning. We should acquire as much learning as we should. We should acquire as

much valour, that is, fearlessness as we can. We must develop commerce and industries to the greatest possible extent. If we do all these things out of a sense of service and devotion, true *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* may be born amongst us. Then there would be no feeling of high or low among them. If we do something like this something may happen in future. When such *varnadharma* prevails, all the bickerings that go on in the name of communism, socialism, Congressism, Gandhism, casteism, etc., would be over.

Answers to Questions at Gandhi Seva Sangh Meeting,  
Brindaban II (H.)

*Gandhi Seva Sanghke Panchama Varshik Adhiveshan (Brindaban, Bihar) ka Vivaran*, pp. 50-9

#### 215. NEED FOR A CHARTER OF DUTIES

[Before 16 April 1940]

RECEIVED YOUR CABLE.<sup>1</sup> HAVE CAREFULLY READ YOUR FIVE ARTICLES.<sup>2</sup> YOU WILL PERMIT ME TO SAY YOU ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK. I FEEL SURE THAT I CAN DRAW UP A BETTER CHARTER OF RIGHTS THAN YOU HAVE DRAWN UP. BUT OF WHAT GOOD WILL IT BE? WHO WILL BECOME ITS GUARDIAN? IF YOU MEAN PROPAGANDA OR POPULAR EDUCATION YOU HAVE BEGUN AT THE WRONG END. I SUGGEST THE RIGHT WAY. BEGIN WITH A CHARTER OF DUTIES OF MAN (BOTH D AND M CAPITALS) AND I PROMISE THE RIGHTS WILL FOLLOW AS SPRING FOLLOWS WINTER. I WRITE FROM EXPERIENCE. AS A YOUNG MAN I BEGAN LIFE BY SEEKING TO ASSERT MY RIGHTS AND I SOON DISCOVERED I HAD NONE NOT EVEN OVER MY WIFE. SO I BEGAN BY DISCOVERING AND PERFORMING MY DUTY BY MY WIFE MY CHILDREN FRIENDS COMPANIONS AND SOCIETY AND I FIND TODAY THAT I HAVE GREATER RIGHTS, PERHAPS THAN ANY LIVING MAN I KNOW. IF THIS IS TOO TALL A CLAIM THEN I SAY I DO NOT KNOW ANYONE WHO POSSESSES GREATER RIGHTS THAN I.

Cable to H. G. Wells<sup>3</sup>

*The Hindustan Times*, 16 April 1940



<sup>1</sup> H. G. Wells had sought Gandhi's opinion on the Rights of Man drawn up by him.

<sup>2</sup> Published in *The Hindustan Times*.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert George Wells (1866-1946) English novelist, sociological writer and historian, author of *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The Shape of Things to Come*, *The Outline of History*, *The Invisible Man* and various other works.

## 216 BALANCED GROWTH

Scvagram,

August 23, 1946

One of the complaints that has been made by one of you is that too much emphasis is laid here on manual work. I am a firm believer in the educative value of manual work. Our present educational system is meant for strengthening and perpetuating the imperialist power in India. Those of you who have been brought up under it have naturally developed a taste for it and so find labour irksome. No one in Government schools or colleges bothers to teach the students how to clean the roads or latrines. Here cleanliness and sanitation form the very Alpha and Omega of your training. Scavenging is a fine art you should take pains to learn. Persistent questioning and healthy inquisitiveness are the first requisite for acquiring learning of any kind. Inquisitiveness should be tempered by humility and respectful regard for the teacher. It must not degenerate into impudence. The latter is the enemy of receptivity of mind. There can be no knowledge without humility and the will to learn.

Useful manual labour, intelligently performed, is the means *par excellence* for developing the intellect. One may develop a sharp intellect otherwise too. But then it will not be a balanced growth but an unbalanced distorted abortion. It might easily make of one a rogue and a rascal. A balanced intellect presupposes a harmonious growth of body, mind and soul. That is why we give to manual labour the central place in our curriculum of training here. An intellect that is developed through the medium of socially useful labour will be an instrument for service and will not easily be led astray or fall

into devious paths. The latter can well be a scourge. If you grasp that essential point, the money spent by your respective governments in sending you here for training will have been well spent.

Address to 'Trainees of Basic Teachers' Camp  
*Haripur*, 8 Sept 1946

## 217. THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE.

[3 September 1946]

Rajasahab,

I have your two letters. Why do you sign in English? I have written a lot about the zamindars; I cannot remember in which particular issues. A good many collections of my articles have been published. With a little effort one of your secretaries will be able to look these up and tell you. My opinion, in brief, is that no zamindar or rich man should perish. The greatest need is to bring about a change of heart in them. If every zamindar, every Rājāh and every millionaire lives as a servant of the people there will be no problem. In the final analysis land belongs to the man who has worked on it. The present system which divides people into capitalists or landlords on the one hand and the have-nots or serfs on the other should not be tolerated. All this I have explained in my articles a number of times.

As to religion, I feel our country, and indeed the world, should have room for all religions. I consider no one high and no one low. The duties enjoined on a *Brahmin* or *Kshatriya* are for all. Only, some have these in greater measure than others. But these are duties, never rights. One who claims a right to Brahminhood is not a *Brahmin*. Similarly, the claimant to the prerogatives of a *Kshatriya* ceases to be one. I have shown the easiest way to save Hinduism and that is that we should all become *Bhangis* voluntarily. For a *Bhangi* can have knowledge, valour and business acumen, while the spirit

of service will always be there. In my own view all these are for service.

Letter to a Zamindar II  
*Pyarelal Papers*

## 218 OBLIGATION OF PHYSICAL LABOUR

Q. Why should we insist on a Rabindranath<sup>1</sup> or a Raman<sup>2</sup> earning his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer wastage? Why should not brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers, for both of them perform useful social work?

A. Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times *Brahmins* worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour is a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of bread-labour first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref.

Question Box  
*Harijan* 23 Feb. 1947

<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore  
<sup>2</sup> C. V. Raman, the physicist

## 219 THE DUTY OF CITIZENSHIP OF THE WORLD

[Before 8 June 1947]

All rights to be deserved and preserved come from duty well done. Thus the very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. From this very funda-

mental statement perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of man and woman and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be shown to be a usurpation hardly worth fighting for.

'A Letter' (G.)

*Haryan*, 8 June 1947

*Haryanbandhu*, 8 June 1947

## 220. DERIVING RIGHTS FROM DUTIES

I want to deal with one great evil that is afflicting society today. The capitalist and the zamindar talk of their rights, the labourer on the other hand of his, the prince of his divine right to rule, the *ryot* of his to resist it. If all simply insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos.

If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule and the humble duty of the *ryots* to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go as being injurious to the well-being of society, the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so to the same well-being. The latter behaviour is probably calculated to injure the millions rather than the few claimants of divine or other rights. They could but die a brave or cowardly death but those few dead would not bring in the orderly life of blissful contentment. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the correlation of rights and duties.

I venture to suggest that rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed are not worth having. They will be usurpations sooner discarded the better. A wretched parent who claims obedience from his children without first doing his duty by them excites nothing but contempt. It is distortion of religious precept for a dissolute husband to expect compliance in every respect from his dutiful wife. But the children who flout their parent who is ever ready to do his duty towards

them would be considered ungrateful and would harm themselves more than their parent. The same can be said about husband and wife. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance in and dislocation of life and business which you see in India as in the other parts of the world. What I call the law of *satyagraha* is to be deduced from an appreciation of duties and rights flowing therefrom.

What is the duty of the Hindu towards his Muslim neighbour? His duty is to befriend him as man, to share his joys and sorrows and help him in distress. He will then have the right to expect similar treatment from his Muslim neighbour and will probably get the expected response. Supposing the Hindus are in a majority in a village with a sprinkling of Muslims in their midst, the duty of the majority towards the few Muslim neighbours is increased manifold, so much so that the few will not feel that their religion makes any difference in the behaviour of the Hindus towards them. The Hindus will *then* earn the right, *not* before, that the Muslims will be natural friends with them and in times of danger both the communities will act as one man. But suppose that the few Muslims do not reciprocate the correct behaviour of the many Hindus and show fight in every action, it will be a sign of unmanliness. What is then the duty of the many Hindus? Certainly not to overpower them by the brute strength of the many; that will be usurpation of an unearned right. Their duty will be to check their unmanly behaviour as they would that of their blood brothers.

It is unnecessary for me to dilate further upon the illustration. I will close it by saying that the application will be exactly the same if the position is reversed. From what I have said it is easy enough to extend the application with profit to the whole of the present state which has become baffling because people do not apply in practice the doctrine of deriving every right from a prior duty well performed.

The same rule applies to the Princes and the *ryots*. The former's duty is to act as true servants of the people. They will rule not by right granted by some outside authority, never by

the right of the sword. They will rule by right of service, of greater wisdom. They will then have the right to collect taxes voluntarily paid and expect certain services equally voluntarily rendered, not for themselves but for the sake of the people under their care. If they fail to perform this simple and primary duty, the *ryots* not only owe no return duty but the duty devolves on them of resisting the princely usurpation. It may be otherwise said that the *ryots* earn the right of resisting the usurpation or misrule. But the resistance will become a crime against man in terms of duty if it takes the form of murder, rapine and plunder. Force that performance of duty naturally generates is the non-violent and invincible force that *satyagraha* brings into being.

‘Rights or Duties’

*Harijan*, 6 July 1947

## § 6. Equality and Exploitation

### 221. INHERENT EQUALITY OF ALL

September 16, 1947

I had hoped on coming to Tanjore today to discuss the *Brahmin-non-Brahmin* question here and I had the pleasure of having a brief discussion with some of the friends this afternoon. I am not free nor is it necessary for me to discuss and place before you the contents of our discussion. But I was exceedingly glad of this discussion. I now understand the movement perhaps a little better than I did before the discussion. I have placed my humble view before those friends, of which they are at liberty to make what use they like. But throughout the discussion I saw a note of one thing which seemed to oppress these friends. They seemed to think that I had identified myself with the notion of inherited superiority and inferiority. I assured them that nothing was farther from my thought and told them that I would gladly explain my meaning of *varnashrama* more fully than I have done in order

to remove the slightest misunderstanding as to this question of superiority. In my opinion there is no such thing as inherited or acquired superiority.

I believe in the rock-bottom doctrine of *Advaita* and my interpretation of *Advaita* excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage whatsoever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All—whether born in India or in England or America or in any circumstances whatsoever—have the same soul as any other. And it is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men that I fight the doctrine of superiority which many of our rulers arrogate to themselves. I have fought this doctrine of superiority in South Africa inch by inch, and it is because of that inherent belief that I delight in calling myself a scavenger, a spinner, a weaver, a farmer and a labourer. And I have fought against the *Brahmins* themselves wherever they have claimed any superiority for themselves either by reason of their birth or by reason of their subsequently acquired knowledge. *I consider that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow-being.* And there is the amplest warrant for the belief that I am enunciating in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and I am therefore through and through with every non-*Brahmin* when he fights this monster of superiority, whether it is claimed by a *Brahmin* or by anybody else. He who claims superiority at once forfeits his claim to be called a man. That is my opinion.

But in spite of all my beliefs that I have explained to you, I still believe in *varnashrama dharma*. *Varnashrama dharma* to my mind is a law which, however much you and I may deny, cannot be abrogated. To admit the working of that law is to free ourselves for the only pursuit in life for which we are born. *Varnashrama dharma* is humility. Whilst I have said that all men and women are born equal, I do not wish therefore to suggest that qualities are not inherited, but on the contrary I believe that just as everyone inherits a particular form so does he inherit the particular characteristics and qualities of his progenitors, and to make this admission is to conserve one's energy. That frank admission, if we will act up to it, would put a legitimate curb upon our material ambitions, and thereby our energy is set free for extending the field of spiritual research and spiritual evolution. It is this doctrine of *varnash-*

*rama dharma* which I have always accepted. You would be entitled to say that this is not how *varnashrama* is understood in these days. I have myself said time without number that *varnashrama* as it is at present understood and practised is a monstrous parody of the original, but in order to demolish this distortion let us not seek to demolish the original. And if you say that the idealistic *varnashrama* which I have placed before you is quite all right you have admitted all that I like you to admit.

I would also urge on you to believe with me that no nation, no individual, can possibly live without proper ideals. And if you believe with me in<sup>a</sup> the idealistic *varnashrama* you will also strive with me to reach that ideal so far as may be. As a matter of fact the world has not anywhere been able to fight against this law. What has happened and what must happen in fighting against the law is to hurt ourselves and to engage in a vain effort; and I suggest to you that your fight will be all the more successful if you understand all that our forefathers have bequeathed to us and engage in fighting all the evil excrescences that have grown round this great bequest. And if you accept what I have ventured to suggest to you, you will find that the solution of the *Brahmin* and non-*Brahmin* question also, in so far as it is concerned with the religious aspect, becomes very easy. As a non-*Brahmin* I would seek to purify Brahminism in so far as a non-*Brahmin* can, but not to destroy it. I would dislodge the *Brahmin* from the arrogation of superiority or from places of profit. Immediately a *Brahmin* becomes a profiteering agency he ceases to be a *Brahmin*. But I would not touch his great learning wherever I see it. And whilst he may not claim superiority by reason of learning I myself must not withhold that meed of homage that learning, wherever it resides, always commands. But I must not go deeper into the subject before a large audience of this kind.

After all I must fall upon one sovereign remedy which I think is applicable for all the ills of life. And that is, in whatever fight we engage, the fight should be clean and straight, and there should not be the slightest departure from truth and *ahimsa*. And if we will keep our carriage safely on these two rails you will find that our fight even though we may commit a thousand blunders will always smell clean and will be easier



fought. And even as a train that is derailed comes to a disastrous end, so shall we, if we be derailed off these two rails, come to a disaster. A man who is truthful and does not mean ill even to his adversary will be slow to believe charges even against his foes. He will, however, try to understand the viewpoints of his opponents and will always keep an open mind and seek every opportunity of serving his opponents. I have endeavoured to apply this law in my relations with Englishmen and Europeans in general in South Africa as well as here and not without some success. How much more then should we apply this law in our homes, in our relations, in our domestic affairs, in connection with our own kith and kin?

Speech at Tanjore

*Young India*, 29 Sept. 1927

## 222. SUPERIORITY AND INFERIORITY

October 23, 1927

A few young men sought an interview with Gandhiji for a discussion on *varnadharma*. . . . They were troubled as to how the *Brahmin* could shed his superiority so long as he continued to be a *Brahmin*.

Gandhiji said, taking an extreme case to drive the matter home:

Even Sita is not superior to a prostitute. Are you satisfied?

The friend said, 'No, quite shocked.' Gandhiji said:

I am, for Sita had no sense of superiority. Had she been proud of her purity she would have been nowhere. But she was not even conscious of it. She was pure, because it was impossible for her to be otherwise. Are the Himalayas conscious of their supreme heights? Not a bit of it. But if they were, they would crumble to pieces. Even so, *varna*, if it becomes synonymous with superiority, and an expression of egotism, will be nothing better than a halter round the neck. Max Müller put the spirit of Hinduism in a nutshell when he said: 'India considers life as only one thing—DUTY—whereas others thought of enjoyment *cum* duty.' *Varna* is nothing more

than an indication of the duty that has been handed down to each one of us by our forefathers.

In the West, when they talk of the amelioration of the lot of the masses, they talk of raising their standard of life. In India we need not talk of raising the standard of life. For, how can an outsider raise the standard, when the standard is within every one of us? We can only strive to increase man's opportunities of realizing and fulfilling his duties and of getting nearer to God. But you are today attempting the impossible task of uprooting the tree. Some of the branches and leaves, I admit, are rotten. Let us have the pruning knife and lop off those diseased branches, but let us not lay the axe at the root. You will be bad gardeners to destroy the tree under which you have lived and grown. Cut off the unnecessary excrescences, even if in the end the trunk with the root appears like a stubble, but if you keep the root intact and then fondly water it, it will some-day grow into a fine big tree.

But as I said the tree cannot be destroyed, for the true *Brahmin* will stand all blows and yet stand erect in his sacrificial dignity. I will admit that there are few *Brahmins* today, few *Kshatriyas*, few *Vaishyas* and even few *Sudras*. For the *Sudra* too has an individuality. We are all slaves today. We cower today before the insolent might of a Dyer. Let us all aspire to fulfil each one of us his calling. Most of us will have to be *Vaishyas*, for it is the *Vaishyas* who hold us under their heels.

We will revere the *Brahmin*, not because of his superiority, but because of the superior service that he renders to us. It is because we are degraded today that one cannot think except in the terms of superiority and inferiority.

Discussion on *Varnadharma*  
*Young India*, 3 Nov. 1927

## 223 REMOVAL OF EXPLOITATION

Satvagraha Ashram,  
Sabarmati,  
March 20, 1928

There can be no living harmony between races and nations unless the main cause is removed, namely, exploitation of the weak by the strong. We must revise the interpretation of the so-called doctrine of 'the survival of the fittest'

M. K. GANDHI

Message to Marcelle Capy  
SN 13117

## 224 PLIGHT OF CLERICAL WORKERS

Sheth Ranchhodlal Anirtilal has sent me the following scheme of Industrial Insurance for clerks.<sup>1</sup>

I understand little of insurance, but I take it that in this age of insurance any scheme of industrial insurance devised for the benefit of the clerical workers would be to their good. Only an insurance expert can offer helpful criticism of the scheme, and I take it that Sjt. Ranchhodlal has framed the scheme in consultation with some large-hearted expert.

There cannot be two opinions as to the fact that mill-owners, no less than other business and commercial firms, ought to take a paternal interest in the welfare of their employees. The relations between the employer and the employee have been up to now merely those of the master and servant, they should be of father and children. I therefore welcome the scheme.

Medical relief should not, in my opinion, be free. It should be genuine, prompt and cheap. Free aid is likely to undermine their independent spirit. Sometimes free aid is rendered perfunctorily and sometimes it is abused, from both of which evils the clerks should be saved.

The main grievance of the clerk and the working man is low pay and indifference to his welfare. The measures sug-

gested in the scheme will be a direct and simple redress of the grievance, and I welcome them.

The condition of clerks is, in certain respects, undoubtedly much more pitiable. I have a vivid picture of their condition before my mind. It was given to me in 1915 in Calcutta by the Marwari Clerks' Association. It was a tragic tale of their helplessness. The number of clerks is small, their power of endurance and their capacity for union is feeble. Whereas the clerk is the only earning member of his family, practically all the members of the working-man's family are wage-earners. The clerks must bestir themselves to improve their own condition. They must unite, and must educate their dependants, especially their wives, to engage in some gainful occupation. They have lost all self-confidence and are helpless. Those who are honest, competent in their work, conscientious and hard working need not despair of finding a suitable situation.

True social economics will teach us that the working-man, the clerk and the employer are parts of the same indivisible organism. None is smaller or greater than the other. Their interests should be not conflicting but identical and interdependent.

'Clerks v Working Men' (G.

*Navajivan*, 22 Apr. 1928

*Young India*, 3 May 1928

<sup>1</sup> Not reproduced here

## 225. DRAWBACKS IN ALL PROFESSIONS

July 2, 1928

Bhaishri Bechar Parmar,

The drawbacks which you think belong to the barber's profession are probably to be found in all professions. If every-

one, however, clings to his own profession for a living, there would be minimum friction.

*Vandemataram* from  
MOHANDAS GANDHI

Letter to Bechar Parmar (G)  
GN 5567

## 226. EQUALITY OF TREATMENT

March 16, 1932

It is possible and necessary to treat human beings on terms of equality, but this can never apply to their morals. One would be affectionate and attentive to a rascal and to a saint; but one cannot and must not put saintliness and rascality on the same footing.

Fragment of a Letter

The Diary of Mahadev Desai, Vol. I, p. 15

## 227. EQUAL DISTRIBUTION THROUGH NON-VIOLENCE

In last week's article on the Constructive Programme I mentioned equal distribution of wealth as one of the 13 items.

The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness,

and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into

his earnings and there is *ahimsa* in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale in non-violence. Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that *ahimsa* is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should therefore be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. *Ahimsa* is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples. To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in from age to age and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains, because the existence of the world in a broad sense depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore God signifies an unchanging and living law. No one has ever really found Him. But *avatars* and prophets have, by means of their *tapasya*, given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal Law.

If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle

I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man) that the knowledge of the strength of *ahimsa* entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

I scarcely need to write anything about non-co-operation and civil disobedience, for the readers of *Haryanbandhu* are familiar with these and their working.

‘Equal Distribution’

*Haryanbandhu*, 24 Aug 1940

*Harijan*, 25 Aug 1940

## 228 EXPLOITATION AND *AHIMS*A

Q In whichever direction in the world one looks today one sees only violence, onslaughts on people's rights and power politics. This is true even of America and England where it is said the voice of the people is the sole arbiter. Have you considered what your *ahimsa* can do in such a situation?

A It is true there is power politics everywhere. But you are mistaken in thinking that in America and England the voice of the people is the sole arbiter. The voice of the people should be the voice of God. That is why we say that the *Pancha* are *Parameshwar*. But where people themselves feed on other people, how can one say that the voice of the people is the voice of God? We see how America and England live on the coloured races, exploit other peoples. It needs no proving



Exploiters are seen to co-operate with exploiters but that does not make their voice the voice of the people. Where the voice of the people is the voice of God the people do not want to live on others. They have truth on one scale of the balance and *ahimsa* on the other, both always having equal weight. This covers my whole reply. For me *ahimsa* is not disabled; it is not weak; it is supreme. Where there is *ahimsa* there is Truth, and Truth is God. How that God manifests Himself I do not know. All I know is that He is all-pervading and where He is all is well. There is therefore one law for all. Wherever in the world truth and *ahimsa* reign there is perfect peace and perfect happiness. If they are not to be found anywhere we must understand that they are hidden from view. But they cannot totally disappear. Those who possess the barque of this faith will safely go across in it and carry others across.

Q. You say that foreigners who decide to live in free India as Indians will have no cause for fear. You will admit that such has not been the case in any other country. Where emphasis is on self others are not disliked but even so some suspicion of them always remains. Can free India escape this?

A. I am firmly of the view that free India will escape this. I can cite striking evidence for it. But it is not necessary. Only this much must be remembered: foreigners have to live here as Indians. If a foreigner staying here wants to protect his rights as a foreigner it can become difficult. It will mean that he wants to stay in free India as a superior person. This must lead to friction. The present quarrel with the British Government cannot go on when India is free. If it does, India cannot be said to be free.

'Question Box' (G.)

*Haryan*, 29 Sept. 1946

*Haryanbandhu*, 29 Sept. 1946

## § 7. Trusteeship

## 229. LABOUR FRANCHISE AND TRUSTEESHIP

October 6, 1934

My Dear Srirangasayi,

I have your letter. It is refreshing to know that the Socialist Party in Andhra appreciates all the amendments suggested by me. I say the Socialist Party because I take it that your letter is representative of the Party's opinion as you have signed it in your capacity as Secretary. But you know in what unmeasured terms the meeting in Banaras has condemned the amendments. Even when I first conceived spinning franchise as a token of the dignity of labour and its universal recognition, a friend had shown me a booklet containing the constitution of the Soviets and drawn my attention to the fact that in Russia labour franchise had a definite place. But here I do not know whether you represent the general body of Socialists. What about those who have passed the resolutions of condemnation?

You take exception to my wish that the rich should regard themselves as trustees for the whole of society rather than as owners of the wealth they might possess. Of course, it is an uphill task, but by no means impossible. Indeed I see definite signs of that idea spreading and being accepted. You suggest that the poor should be regarded as trustees for the rich. But you forget that it is implied in the proposition I have laid down. Because, have I not said that labour is as much capital as metal? Therefore, workers, instead of regarding themselves as enemies of the rich, or regarding the rich as their natural enemies, should hold their labour in trust for those who are in need of it. This they can do only when, instead of feeling so utterly helpless as they do, they realize their importance in human economy and shed their fear or distrust of the rich. Fear and distrust are twin sisters born of weakness. When labour realizes its strength it won't need to use any force against moneyed people. It will simply command their attention and respect.

Letter to B. Srirangasayi  
*The Hindu*, 11 Oct. 1934

## 230. TRUSTEESHIP AND NON-VIOLENCE

May 6, 1939

I am either unable to understand your theory of trusteeship or my reason cannot grasp it. Will you kindly explain it?

It is the same thing whether you are unable to understand it or your reason does not accept it. How can I explain such an important principle in a few minutes? Still I shall try to explain it in brief. Just imagine that I have a crore of rupees in my possession. I can either squander the amount in dissipation or take up the attitude that the money does not belong to me, that I do not own it, that it is a bequest, that it has been put in my possession by God and that only so much of it is mine as is enough for my requirements. My requirements also should be like those of the millions. My requirements cannot be greater because I happen to be the son of a rich man. I cannot spend the money on my pleasures. The man who takes for himself only enough to satisfy the needs customary in his society and spends the rest for social service becomes a trustee.

Ever since the idea of socialism became popular in India, we have been confronted with the question as to what our attitude should be towards the Princes and millionaires. The socialists say that the Princes and the millionaires should be done away with, that all must become workers. They advocate confiscation of the properties of all those people and say that they should be given the same wages as everyone else—from Rs. 5 to eight annas a day or Rs. 15 a month. So much for what the socialists say. We too assert that the rich are not the owners of their wealth whereas the labourer is the owner of his labour. He is, therefore, from our point of view, richer than the rich. A zamindar can be recognized as the owner of one, two or ten *bighas* of land. That is to say, of as much as may be necessary for his livelihood. We also want that his wages should not be higher than those of the labourer, that he should maintain himself on eight annas a day and use the rest of his wealth for the welfare of society. But we would not take away his property by force. This is the most important

point. We also wish that the Princes and the millionaires too should do manual work and maintain themselves on eight annas a day, considering the rest of their property as national trust.

At this point it may be asked as to how many trustees of this type one can really find. As a matter of fact, such a question should not arise at all. It is not directly related to our theory. There may be just one such trustee or there may be none at all. Why should we worry about it? We should have the faith that we can, without violence or with so little violence that it can hardly be called violence, create such a feeling among the rich. We should act in that faith. That is sufficient for us. We should demonstrate through our endeavour that we can end economic disparity with the help of non-violence. Only those who have no faith in non-violence can ask how many trustees of this kind can be found.

You may say that such a thing can never happen. You may consider it as something not in keeping with human nature. But I cannot believe that you are not able to understand it or that your reason cannot grasp it.

Answers to Questions at Gandhi Seva Sangh Meeting,

Brindaban II (H.)

*Gandhi Seva Sanghke Panchama Varshek Adhiveshan (Brindaban, Bithar) ka Unnan*, pp. 50-9

### 231. TRUSTEESHIP AND THE STATE

Q. Is it possible to defend by means of non-violence anything which can only be gained through violence?

A. It followed from what he had said above that what was gained by violence could not only not be defended by non-violence but the latter required the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains.

Q. Is the accumulation of capital possible except through violence whether open or tacit?

A. Such accumulation by private persons was impossible except through violent means but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society was not only possible, it was desirable and inevitable.

Q. Whether a man accumulates material or moral wealth he does so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Has he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?

A. No, he has no moral right.

Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the State?

A. As he had said yesterday, choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument of violence or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may of course derive their final authority from State-made laws?

A. That question involved some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vested in the trustee, not in the State. It was to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor did he, the speaker, hold that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence.

'Gandhiji on Trusteeship'  
*Haryana*, 16 Feb. 1947

## 232. TRUSTEES AND PARTNERS

Gandhi Camp, Patna,  
April 18, 1947

Zamindars or capitalists will not be able to survive if they continue to suppress peasants and labourers. Now you should behave towards them not as their masters but as partners and friends, and act as their trustees; then alone can you survive. For a long time during the British regime you have been exploiting the labourers and peasants. Therefore I advise you in your own interest that if you do not see the writing on the wall, it will be difficult for you to adjust.

Talk with Zamindars (G.)  
*Bihari Komi Agman*, p. 222

## § 8. Industrialism and Machinery

## 233. MACHINERY AND ITS MISUSE

The late Shri Maganlal wrote to me many letters which were of value for the public, but, in accordance with my habit, I used to tear them up. Moreover, I had never expected that he would die before me. About fifteen days before his death, he wrote to me a letter which I still have with me, and I give below a part of it which is of public interest . . .<sup>1</sup>

Both these criticisms deserve consideration. People should not rush to any kind of exhibition. They can reap some benefit from exhibitions only if they have some knowledge about the articles exhibited and if they exercise discrimination regarding their value. Who can calculate the loss we have suffered as a result of our giving up some of our age-old household implements without sufficient knowledge about them? Just as it is absurd to say that all that is old is good, similarly, it is equally absurd to conclude that, just because a thing is old, it is useless. No one is opposed to machinery. Our opposition is to its misuse, or its excessive use. I did not know at all that there is a fifteen per cent duty on machines which are operated by

living beings and a five per cent duty on those operated by mechanical power; perhaps, many of the readers too may be ignorant of this fact. However, I am not surprised to know about this discrimination for it was only when I saw such discrimination being practised by the Government in every sphere of its activity that the idea of non-co-operation occurred to me.

'Utility of Machines' (G.)

*Navajwan*, 12 Aug. 1928

<sup>1</sup> Mañanlal had doubted the utility of machines and implements exhibited at agricultural exhibitions and criticized the Government's discriminatory customs policy which encouraged the imports of steam or oil-driven machines at the cost of machines which could be worked by hand or with the help of bullocks.

#### 234. INDIA AND INDUSTRIALISM

[Before 20 December 1928]

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts. Unless the capitalists of India help to avert that tragedy by becoming trustees of the welfare of the masses and by devoting their talents not to amassing wealth for themselves but to the service of the masses in an altruistic spirit, they will end either by destroying the masses or being destroyed by them.

Discussion with a Capitalist

*Young India*, 20 Dec. 1928

#### 235. MACHINERY AND MAN

The author of the following article, which he heads 'The Hand of Man', writes ...<sup>1</sup>

I do not desire to add by way of preface anything more to the letter beyond expressing the hope that the reader will take to heart the testimony against machinery worship of one who is of the West and who has therefore tasted both the sweets and the bitters of the machinery age. Let him not run away with the idea that either the writer or I abuse all machinery because it is machinery. What is resisted is the usurpation by machinery of the function of man and his consequent slavery to it.

'The Hand of Man'

*Young India*, 21 Mar. 1929

<sup>1</sup> In his article the writer, an American painter, had tried to show that Gandhi's was a *human* ideal as opposed to 'the inhuman mechanistic ideal sweeping over the world'

## 236. THE CRAZE FOR MACHINERY

Mr. Henry Eaton writes from California . . .<sup>1</sup>

This letter betrays two superstitions. One of them is that India is unfit to govern herself because she cannot defend herself and is torn with internal dissensions. The writer gratuitously assumes that if Britain withdraws Russia is ready to pounce upon India. This is an insult to Russia. Is Russia's one business to rule over those peoples who are not ruled by Britain? And if Russia has such nefarious designs upon India, does not the writer see that the same power that will oust the British from domination is bound to prevent any other domination? If the control is handed to India's representatives by agreement, there must be some condition whereby Britain will guarantee protection from foreign aggression as a penance for her conscious or unconscious neglect during all these past years to fit India for defending herself.

Personally, even under agreement, I should rely more upon the capacity of the nation to offer civil resistance to any aggressor as it did last year with partial success in the case of the British occupier. Complete success awaits complete assimilation of non-violence in thought, word and deed by the



nation. An ocular demonstration of the success of nationwide *satyagraha* must be a prelude to its worldwide acceptance and hence as a natural corollary to the admission of the futility of armament. The only antidote to armament which is the visible symbol of violence is *satyagraha*, the visible symbol of non-violence. But the writer is oppressed also by the fear of our dissensions. In the first place they are grossly exaggerated in transmission to the West. In the second place, they are hardened during foreign control. Imperial rule means *divide et impera*. They must therefore melt with the withdrawal of the frigid foreign rule and the introduction of the warmth-giving sunshine of real freedom.

The second superstition is harder still. I mean that about the spinning-wheel. This is shared by some even in India. The writer begs the question when he calls the method of machinery enlightened and that of the hand ignorant. It has still to be proved that displacement of the hand by the machine is a blessing in every case. Nor is it true that that which is easy is better than that which is hard. It is still less proved that every change is a blessing or that everything old is fit only to be discarded.

I hold that the machinery method is harmful when the same thing can be done easily by millions of hands not otherwise occupied. It is any day better and safer for the millions spread in the seven hundred thousand villages of India scattered over an area nineteen hundred miles long and fifteen hundred broad that they manufacture their clothing in their own villages even as they prepare their own food. These villages cannot retain the freedom they have enjoyed from time immemorial, if they do not control the production of prime necessities of life. Western observers hastily argue from Western conditions that what may be true of them must be true of India where conditions are different in so many material respects. Applications of the laws of economics must vary with varying conditions.

The machinery method is no doubt easy. But it is not necessarily a blessing on that account. The descent to a certain place is easy but dangerous. The method of the hand is a blessing, in the present case at any rate, because it is hard. If the craze for the machinery method continues, it is highly

likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God. Millions cannot keep themselves fit by games and athletics. And why should they exchange the useful, productive, hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive games and exercises? They are all right today for a change and recreation. They will jar upon us when they become a necessary occupation in order that we may have the appetite for eating the food in the production of which we had no hand or part.

Lastly, I do not subscribe to the belief that everything old is bad. Truth is old and difficult. Untruth has many attractions. But I would gladly go back to the very old Golden Age of Truth. Good old brown bread is any day superior to the pasty white bread which has lost much of its nutritive value in going through the various processes of refinement. The list of old and yet good things can be endlessly multiplied. The spinning-wheel is one such thing, at any rate, for India.

When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any power in the West or the East and will then feel secure without having to carry the burden of expensive armament. Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression.

'Superstitutions Die Hard'

*Young India*, 2 July 1931

<sup>1</sup> The letter is not reproduced here

## 237. MASS PRODUCTION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

London,  
[16 October 1931]

Q. Do you feel, Gandhiji, that mass production will raise the standard of living of the people?

A. I do not believe in it at all. There is a tremendous fallacy behind Mr. Ford's reasoning.<sup>1</sup> Without simultaneous distribution on an equally mass scale, the production can result only in a great world tragedy. Take Mr. Ford's cars. The saturation point is bound to be reached soon or late. Beyond that point the production of cars cannot be pushed. What will happen then?

Mass production takes no note of the real requirement of the consumer. If mass production were in itself a virtue, it should be capable of indefinite multiplication. But it can be definitely shown that mass production carries within it its own limitations. If all countries adopted the system of mass production, there would not be a big enough market for their products. Mass production must then come to a stop.

Q. I wonder whether you feel that this saturation point has already arrived in the Western world. Mr. Ford says that there never can be too many articles of quality, that the needs of the world are constantly increasing and that, therefore, while there might be saturation in the market for a given commodity, the general saturation would never be reached

A. Without entering upon an elaborate argument, I would categorically state my conviction that the mania for mass production is responsible for the world crisis. Granting for the moment that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still, it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go in a round-about way to regulate distribution, whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated, and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation.

The American friend mentioned Mr. Ford's favourite plan of decentralization of industry by the use of electric power conveyed on wires to the remotest corner, instead of coal and steam, as a possible remedy, and drew up the picture of hundreds and thousands of small, neat, smokeless villages, dotted with factories, run by village communities. 'Assuming all that to be possible', he finally asked Gandhiji, 'how far will it meet your objection?'

A. My objection won't be met by that, because, while it is true that you will be producing things in innumerable areas, the power will come from one selected centre. That, in the end, I think, would be found to be disastrous. It would place such a limitless power in one human agency that I dread to think of it. The consequence, for instance, of such a control of power would be that I would be dependent on that power for light, water, even air, and so on. That, I think, would be terrible.

Q. ... have you any idea as to what Europe and America should do to solve the problem presented by too much machinery?

A. You see that these nations are able to exploit the so-called weaker or unorganized races of the world. Once those races gain this elementary knowledge and decide that they are no more going to be exploited, they will simply be satisfied with what they can provide themselves. Mass production, then, at least where the vital necessities are concerned, will disappear.

Q. As a world organization?

A. Yes.

Q. But even these races will require more and more goods as their needs multiply.

A. They will then produce for themselves. And when that happens, mass production, in the technical sense in which it is understood in the West, ceases.

Q. You mean to say it becomes local?

A. When production and consumption both become localized, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present-day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end. Take a concrete instance. England today is the cloth shop of the world. It, therefore, needs to hold a world in bondage to secure its market. But under the change

that I have envisaged, she would limit her production to the actual needs of her 45 millions of population. When that need is satisfied, the production will necessarily stop. It won't be continued for the sake of bringing in more gold irrespective of the needs of a people and at the risk of their impoverishment. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest, as is happening today, for instance, in America. America is today able to hold the world in fee by selling all kinds of trinkets, or by selling her unrivalled skill, which she has a right to do. She has reached the acme of mass production, and yet she has not been able to abolish unemployment or want. There are still thousands, perhaps millions of people in America who live in misery, in spite of the phenomenal riches of the few. The whole of the American nation is not benefited by this mass production.

Q. There the fault lies in distribution. It means that, whilst our system of production has reached a high pitch of perfection, the distribution is still defective. If distribution could be equalized, would not mass production be sterilized of its evils?

A. No, the evil is inherent in the system. Distribution can be equalized when production is localized; in other words, when the distribution is simultaneous with production. Distribution will never be equal so long as you want to tap other markets of the world to dispose of your goods. That does not mean that the world has no use for the marvellous advances in science and organization that the Western nations have made. It only means that the Western nations have to use their skill. If they want to use their skill abroad, from philanthropic motives, America would say, 'Well, we know how to make bridges, we won't keep it a secret, but we say to the whole world, we will teach you how to make bridges and we will charge you nothing.' America says, 'Where other nations can grow one blade of wheat, we can grow two thousand.' Then, America should teach that art free of charge to those who will learn it, but not aspire to grow wheat for the whole world, which would spell a sorry day for the world indeed.

The American friend next asked Gandhiji, referring to Russia, whether it was not a country that had developed mass production without exploiting, in Gandhiji's sense, the less industrialized nations, or without falling into the pit of unequal distribution.

A. In other words, you want me to express opinion on State-controlled industry, i.e., an economic order in which both production and distribution are controlled and regulated by the State as is being today done in Soviet Russia. Well, it is a new experiment. How far it will ultimately succeed, I do not know. If it were not based on force, I would dote on it. But today, since it is based on force, I do not know how far and where it will take us.

Q. Then, you do not envisage mass production as an ideal future of India?

A. Oh yes, mass production, certainly, but not based on force. After all, the message of the spinning-wheel is that. It is mass production, but mass production in people's own homes. If you multiply individual production to millions of times, would it not give you mass production on a tremendous scale? But I quite understand that your 'mass production' is a technical term for production by the fewest possible number through the aid of highly complicated machinery. I have said to myself that that is wrong. My machinery must be of the most elementary type which I can put in the homes of the millions. Under my system, again, it is labour which is the current coin, not metal. Any person who can use his labour has that coin, has wealth. He converts his labour into cloth, he converts his labour into grain. If he wants paraffin oil, which he cannot himself produce, he uses his surplus grain for getting the oil. It is exchange of labour on free, fair and equal terms—hence it is no robbery. You may object that this is a reversion to the primitive system of barter. But is not all international trade based on the barter system?

Look, again, at another advantage that this system affords. You can multiply it to any extent. But concentration of production *ad infinitum* can only lead to unemployment. You may

say that workers thrown out of work by the introduction of improved machinery will find occupation in other jobs. But in an organized country where there are only fixed and limited avenues of employment, where the worker has become highly skilled in the use of one particular kind of machinery, you know from your own experience that this is hardly possible. Are there not over three millions unemployed in England today? A question was put to me only the other day: 'What are we doing today with these three million unemployed?' They cannot shift from factory to field in a day. It is a tremendous problem.

Q. Would not machine agriculture make a great difference to India, as it has done to America and Canada?

A. Probably. But that is a question I do not consider myself fit to answer. We in India have not been able to use much complicated machinery in agriculture with profit so far. We do not exclude machinery. We are making cautious experiments. But we have not found power-driven agricultural machinery to be necessary.

Q. Some people have the impression that you are opposed to machinery in general. This is not true, I believe.

A. That is quite wrong. The spinning-wheel is also machinery. It is a beautiful work of art. It typifies the use of machinery on a universal scale. It is machinery reduced to the terms of the masses.

Q. So, you are opposed to machinery, only because and when it concentrates production and distribution in the hands of the few?

A. You are right. I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. That is all.

Interview with Callender, an American Correspondent  
*Haryan*, 2 Nov. 1934

<sup>1</sup> The interviewer had earlier met Ford in America, who had put forward the view that demand for cheaper things would stimulate mass production.

## 238. MACHINERY AND DISPLACEMENT OF LABOUR

December 10, 1934

Dear Friend,

I thank you for your letter. Fortunately I have your book also sent to me for which too, kindly accept my thanks.

Your letter gave me great joy in that there was in it promise of your support to my humble effort on behalf of the villagers. I have no difficulty whatsoever in endorsing your remarks about heavy industries. I know that the heavy industries cannot be organized without power-driven machinery. I can have no quarrel with such use of machinery. My objection comes in when such machinery displaces human labour without providing displaced hands with a substitute at least as good as displaced labour.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI

Letter to M. Visvesvarayya  
CW 9727

## 239. PROPER USE OF MACHINERY

[Before 22 June 1935]<sup>1</sup>

GANDHIJ: Is not this wheel a machine?<sup>2</sup>

[SOCIALIST:] I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery.

Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave.

But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?



Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power-houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work, or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work?

I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many.

But even you as a socialist would not be in favour of an indiscriminate use of machinery. Take printing-presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can one make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them. But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness but this. I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country. This machine no one can oust.

'A Discussion'

*Harjan*, 22 June 1935

<sup>1</sup> A socialist holding a brief for machinery asked Gandhi if the village industries movement was not meant to oust all machinery

<sup>2</sup> Gandhi was just then spinning.

## 240. MECHANIZATION AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

Segaon,<sup>1</sup>

[Before 3 July 1937]

GANDHIJI: What we mean by independence is that we will not live on the sufferance of any people on earth and that there

is a big party in India which will die in vindicating this position. But we will not die killing, though we might be killed. It is a novel experiment, I know. Herr Hitler, I know, does not accept the position of human dignity being maintained without the use of force. Many of us feel that it is possible to achieve independence by non-violent means. It would be a bad day for the whole world if we had to wade through blood. If India gains her freedom by a clash of arms, it will indefinitely postpone the day of real peace for the world. History is a record of perpetual wars, but we are trying to make new history, and I say this as I represent the national mind so far as non-violence is concerned. I have reasoned out the doctrine of the sword, I have worked out its possibilities and come to the conclusion that man's destiny is to replace the law of the jungle with the law of conscious love. The aspiration for independence is the aspiration that fires all nations in Europe. But that independence does not exclude voluntary partnership. Imperialistic ambition is inconsistent with partnership.

Capt Strunk had heard vaguely about Gandhi's views on machines, and Western civilization, Western medicine, etc. He wanted to know them at first hand.

G. I have said that we cannot accept Western models holus-bolus. I do not believe in mechanization of India. I think that rural reconstruction is possible!

STRUNK Are you likely to change these views after you have gained your objective of independence?

G. No. These views represent my permanent convictions. But my opposition to machinery, railways, etc., does not mean that as soon as we are independent we should uproot all of them. They will be used for the benefit of the nation instead of the strategic military purpose they are principally meant to fulfil today.

s. Sometimes you direct your speech against Western sanitation and Western surgery. What is your future plan with regard to India?

G. I am glad you have asked the question. I have said nothing with regard to Western sanitation. In fact I derived

my ideal of rural sanitation from Poore, an English doctor, and I have copied it here. But I have spoken against Western medicine which I have called the concentrated essence of black magic. My view springs out of my non-violence, for my soul rebels against vivisection. You do not know that I had very nearly taken the medical line, when in order to respect the wishes of my dead father I took up law. But in South Africa I again thought of medicine. When I was told I should have to do vivisection, my soul rebelled against it. Why should I, I said, have to practise cruelty on lower animals which I would never practise upon myself? But I do not despise all medical treatment. I know that we can learn a lot from the West about safe maternity and the care of infants. Our children are born anyhow and most of our women are ignorant of the science of bringing up children. Here we can learn a good deal from the West.

But the West attaches an exaggerated importance to prolonging man's earthly-existence. Until the man's last moment on earth you go on drugging him even by injecting. That, I think, is inconsistent with the recklessness with which they will shed their lives in war. Though I am opposed to war, there is no doubt that war induces reckless courage. Well, without ever having to engage in a war I want to learn from you the art of throwing away my life for a noble cause. But I do not want that excessive desire of living that Western medicine seems to encourage in man even at the cost of tenderness for subhuman life. However, I like the emphasis the Western medical science places upon prevention of disease.

s. There is so much over-production of intelligence in India and so much educated unemployment. Could not this army of educated young men be utilized by being sent to the villages?

g. That movement has commenced. But it is only in its infancy. And then there is no over-production of intelligence but over-production of degrees. The brain power has not at all increased, only the art of memorizing has been stimulated, and these degrees can't be carted to the villages. Only the brains, if there are any left, can be used. This reading for degrees has deprived us of initiative. It makes us unfit to go

to the villages. The mechanical university study deprives us of the desire for originality, years of memorizing causes a fatigue of the mind that makes most of us fit for clerical work. Nevertheless the village movement has come to stay.

As Capt. Strunk prepared to leave, Gandhiji introduced him to Mr. Kallenbach.

G. Here is a live Jew and a German Jew, if you please. He was a hot pro-German during the War.

Capt. Strunk was surprised to see a German Jew sitting there bare-bodied and in a *khadi dhoti*.

G. Then I should like to understand from you why the Jews are being persecuted in Germany.

Capt. Strunk tried to explain. So many Jews had taken part during the War and Germany had nothing to say against them. It is the Jews who overran Germany after the War, who ousted Germans from their jobs, and who guided the fight against Hitler that were not being tolerated.

S. I personally think we have just overdone it. That's the mistake revolutions always do. Oh, there is such a lot of hate in Europe. And it has reached its climax in Spain. It is cruel, heartless, stupid, inhuman—this Spanish War. It can't be compared with any other war.

Interview with Capt. Strunk  
*Haryan* 3 July 1937

<sup>1</sup> Capt. Strunk, representative of the official daily newspaper in Germany and a member of Hitler's staff, visited Segalon with a view to investigate conditions in India. He wanted to know the content of independence and how far the people of India seriously meant it.

241. INDUSTRIALIZATION AND INDIVIDUALITY

[On or before 1 January 1939]

FRYDMAN:<sup>1</sup> What attitude should I, as a realist, adopt with regard to the tide of industrialization that is sweeping over the world? ... Is it not waste of energy merely to oppose it? Would it not be better to try to change its direction?

GANDHIJI: You are an engineer. You will therefore appreciate an illustration from mechanics. You know the parallelogram of forces. There the forces do not neutralize each other. Each force acts freely along its own line and we get the resultant which indicates the final direction of motion. It is the same with the problem you have mentioned. As I look at Russia where the apotheosis of industrialization has been reached, the life there does not appeal to me. To use the language of the Bible, 'What shall it avail a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?' In modern terms, it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of society. The villages must become self-sufficient. I see no other solution if one has to work in terms of *ahimsa*. Now I have that conviction. I know there are others who believe in industrialization. I work with all my being for my conviction. The process of adjustment goes on all the time. I do not know what the outcome of it will be. But whatever it is, it will be to the good.

F. But, is no compromise with industrialization possible without imperilling the ideal of self-sufficient villages?

G. Oh, yes. Railways are there, I do not avoid them. I hate motor-cars, but I make use of them willy-nilly all the same. Again, I dislike fountain-pens, but just now I am making use of one though I carry a reed pen about in my box. Every time I use the fountain-pen it hurts me and I think of the neglected reed pen in my box. Compromise comes in at every step, but one must realize that it is a compromise and keep the final goal constantly in front of the mind's eye.

F. When I turn from the busy West to masses in the Indian villages, I seem to be moving in a different world altogether in which stagnation reigns.

G. Yes, so long as you look on the surface. But the moment you talk to them and they begin to speak, you will find that wisdom drops from their lips. Behind the crude exterior you will find a deep reservoir of spirituality I call this culture. You will not find such a thing in the West. You try to engage a European peasant in conversation and you will find that he is uninterested in things spiritual. In the case of the Indian villager an age-old culture is hidden under an encrustment of crudeness. Take away the encrustation, remove his chronic poverty and his illiteracy and you have the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivated, free citizen should be.

Discussion with Maurice Frydman  
*Harjan*, 28 Jan 1939

<sup>1</sup> Frydman, commonly known as Bharatanand, was a Pole. He was the head of the Government Electrical Workshop at Bangalore. He took a keen interest in Indian politics and philosophy.

## 242. PERFECTING VILLAGE TOOLS

[On or before 16 August 1945]<sup>1</sup>

How useful it would be if the engineers in India were to apply their ability to the perfecting of village tools and machines. This must not be beneath their dignity.

'Advice to Engineers'  
*The Hindu*, 25 Aug 1945

<sup>1</sup> This was given during a talk with Labanya Kumar Chowdhary, an engineer from Sylhet, when he visited Sevagram. He had resigned from the Government service during the 1942 movement.

## 243. STATE OWNERSHIP OF KEY INDUSTRIES

On the Train to Delhi,  
August 25, 1946

A correspondent writes:

Do you then believe that industrialization of India to the extent of India producing her own ships, locomotives, aeroplanes, etc., is necessary? If not, will you kindly suggest the alternative means by which India shall discharge her responsibilities as a free and independent nation?

If you believe in the establishment of such industries, who should, in your opinion, exercise control over the management and the profits that will accrue?

I do not believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that Independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottage industries and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly.

There may be sensation in living dangerously. We must draw the distinction between living in the face of danger and living dangerously. A man who dares to live alone in a forest infested by wild beasts and wilder men without a gun and with God as his only Help lives in the face of danger. A man who lives perpetually in mid-air and dives to the earth below to the admiration of a gaping world lives dangerously. One is a purposeful, the other a purposeless, life.

Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however large geographically and numerically in the face of a world armed to the teeth and in the midst of pomp and circumstance, is a question open to the doubt of a sceptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth making even though only an individual or a group makes the effort.

At the same time I believe that some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in armchair or armed socialism. I

believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key industries, I would have State ownership where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess monied men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no *pariahs* of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers. The two are sores of the same disease. And all are men 'for a' that'.

And I avow this belief in the face of the inhumanities we have witnessed and may still have to witness in India as elsewhere. Let us live in the face of danger.

'Alternative to Industrialism'

*Harjan*, 1 Sept 1946

#### 244. CITIES AND VILLAGES

Gandhi Camp, Patna,<sup>1</sup>

April 18, 1947

I will have no regrets if the money invested in these machines is reduced to dust. True India lies in its seven *lakh* villages. Do you know that big cities like London have exploited India and the big cities of India in turn have exploited its villages? That is how palatial mansions have come up in big cities and villages have become impoverished. I want to infuse new life into these villages. I do not say that all the mills in cities should be demolished. But we should be vigilant and start afresh wherever we happen to make a mistake. We should stop exploiting the villages and should closely examine the injustice done to the villages and strengthen their economic structure.

I have no doubt that we have gained much strength through truth and non-violence. The country would never have risen high had it not adopted the weapon of non-violence. But truth has not been followed by the people to the



extent it ought to have been. I am often surprised to see so much untruth prevailing in the country. No doubt our practice of non-violence is far from perfect, but if we had not adopted it, we would not have progressed so much. Our goal is truth and truth can be reached only through the observance of non-violence. Non-violence is only a means. Speaking truth is a habit I have formed right from my childhood, but I had to make efforts to practise non-violence. If we adopt non-violence, truth can be followed along with it. Sometimes good comes out of evil, but that is divine dispensation. Human experience is that as good comes out of good, only evil comes out of evil. Retaliation cannot end violence. If humanity is to rise above violence there is no alternative but to adopt non-violence. Love alone can conquer hatred. The principles of truth and non-violence are nothing new; they have been in existence from the beginning of creation. After 60 years' experience my faith in these ideals is growing stronger day by day.

Talk with Manu Gandhi (G.)  
*Bihari Kanti Agman*, pp 220-1

<sup>1</sup> Manu Gandhi asked about the fate of factories and mines if people adopted village industries.

## § 9. Social Reform

### 245. SOCIAL WORKERS IN VILLAGES

A volunteer writes .<sup>1</sup>  
 I realize the truth of these words everywhere here in Bengal. It is only recently that we thought of going into the villages. At first, we wanted things from the village people. It is only now that we are going to the villages in order to give the people something. How can we expect to win their confidence in such a short time? It often happens that a father takes years to win his son's confidence. We have to win back our honoured place among the village people, and will get nothing

through impatience. Some persons serve their own interests under the guise of service. What other means do the village people have, except experience, to distinguish between such persons and genuine workers? Public workers, therefore, must cultivate patience, forbearance, selflessness and such other virtues. The masses can have no other knowledge but experience to guide them.

‘Who is to Blame?’ (G.)

*Navajivan*, 28 June 1925

<sup>1</sup> The correspondent had stated on the basis of his experience that, if the villagers did not trust workers, the fault lay with the latter

#### 246. SACRIFICING FOR THE MASSES

(Camp) Balasore,  
December 14, 1927

Dear Friend: .

I have your letter written on the train. It is pathetic, for, though I believe that, I have a most accommodating temperament, I see vital differences between us, where you seem to say only differences in mere matters of detail. Our outlooks appear to me to be wholly different. Whereas you have before your mind's eye that microscopic minority, the educated Indian, I have before my mind's eye the lowliest illiterate India living outside the railway beat. Important as the former class undoubtedly is, it has no importance in my estimation except in terms of the latter and for the sake of the latter. The educated class can justify its existence only if it is willing to sacrifice itself for the mass. Your scheme therefore makes no appeal to me.

I have read Sir P. C. Ray's preface and I have read the other writings you have been sending me: but though I admire these great men, they cannot move me from my fundamental position. I want you therefore to recognize the fundamental difference between us and love me in spite of that difference if you can. For my part, the existence of that difference does not prevent me from loving you and therefore writing to you

as often as I can in reply to your communications and striving to make clear the differences between our temperaments so that we may quickly agree to differ and hope one day that one or the other will become a convert.

Yours sincerely,

Captain J. W. Petavel  
Baghbazaar  
Calcutta

Letter to Captain J W Petavel  
SN 12648

247. PAUCITY OF VOLUNTEERS

March 31, 1932

Chi Dahibehn,

I got your letter 'The harder the task, the fewer willing workers will there be. I was, therefore, not surprised by your letter. But understanding workers, when they observe the paucity of volunteers, will become more devoted to their work and make greater sacrifices. If they do so, the number of workers will increase again. There is no exception to this law.

Blessings from  
BAPU

Letter to Dahibehn Patel  
GN 9206

248. SOCIAL WORK AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTATION

June 19, 1932

I consider yours to be a scientific experiment, and therefore I have been watching you all along and have desired to follow your work in full detail. You are a seasoned worker and will encounter many more difficulties in the future. This is the usual pattern of every great work: once in a while we feel that

the line is now clear and we shall be able to make rapid progress. We then relax a little, but all at once we notice a deep ditch in front of us. Therefore you must settle there permanently. The one thing needful is infinite patience with self-confidence at the root of it. Self-confidence means an unflinching faith in one's work. Once this faith is acquired, there is no need to be anxious about the numerous errors we are unconsciously bound to commit from time to time. We must not permit ourselves to be paralysed by the fear that we are perhaps on the wrong path. I consider your experiment to be scientific, yet I think it is not perfectly scientific now; but your work shares in all the characteristics of a scientific experiment, and you have the patience needed in carrying it out. I had noticed one defect in you before, but I think you have remedied it intelligently. Or perhaps your devotion to truth has helped you to remedy it without being conscious of it. That defect was this: you were satisfied with incomplete data and drew hasty conclusions from them. But this is no longer the case.

A scientific experimenter has profound confidence in himself and is therefore never down-hearted. At the same time he is so humble that he is never satisfied with his own work, and is not guilty of drawing hasty conclusions. On the other hand, he measures his progress off and on and declares emphatically that the result of 'x' can be 'y' only. Our workers are generally lacking in this humility of the real man of science. I was therefore not surprised when I found that you were not an exception to this rule. But I do believe that you have the power of persevering till the end. Ardently wishing that you may not suffer even from this little limitation, I gently drew your attention to it many years ago. In order to succeed you must first collect a band of fellow-workers around you. They are bound to be gradually attracted to you in view of the work you are doing. In order to attract them you must cultivate the quality of tolerance springing from generosity. Co-workers cannot do everything that we are doing or we want them to do. But if they are well-intentioned and diligent, we should not despise their assistance. Only thus can we hope to build up a team. In the absence of such an accommodating spirit some of us have to plough a lonely furrow.

One thing more about your work. You should cultivate a

desire to take tips even from those who are working on other lines. It is a mistake to suppose that a scientific experiment can be performed in one particular manner, and those who fall into such error stand to lose a good deal. We for ourselves may follow a method which we think to be right or perfect, but if others do not recognize its perfection or notice defects in it, we should let them go their own way. We thus increase our power of comprehension.

I cannot say anything about your present method of work. As I am partial to you, it seems to be all right from here. But if I am able to see you actually at work, it is possible that many ideas would occur to me and I would place them before you for consideration. I cannot picture your work accurately from this distance. It would therefore be an impertinence to offer any suggestion.

Letter to Jethalal G. Sampat (G.)  
*Mahadevbhaini Diary*, Vol. 1, pp. 234-5

#### 249. CHARITY AND HONEST LABOUR

To those who are hungry and unemployed God can dare reveal Himself only as work and wages as the assurance of food.

I do not want to humiliate the naked by giving them clothes of which they have no need. Instead I will give them work which they need very badly. I will never commit the sin of becoming their benefactor. But having realized that I had a hand in their ruination, I will give them a respectable place in society. I will never give them left-overs and discarded things. I will share with them my best food and clothes and help them in their work. My *ahimsa* will not tolerate giving free food to a healthy person who does not put in honest labour. If I had my say I would close down all charitable institutions and alms-houses. It is because of them the country has fallen and such vices as laziness, hypocrisy and crime have got encouragement.

'Work Instead of Alms' (H.)  
*Haryan Sevak*, 25 Feb. 1939

## 250. DEMOCRACY AND LOCAL INITIATIVE

Bijohnagar,

February 9, 1947

Q. In almost all villages there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to bypass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local co-operation?

A. Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages as they are to be found in our cities. And when power politics enters our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of the villagers rather than a help. I would say that whatever be the consequence, we must make use as much as possible of local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that the English educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India which are the backbone of the country. The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We fail to find him when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villagers. Of course, we are to steer clear of local politics and this we shall learn to do when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to bypass villagers. As I knew this very difficulty, I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of one village one worker, except that where he or she does not know Bengali, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experiences. I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusions. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation as is implied in the sentence that 'work becomes entirely contingent

upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in a single village: trying to work through local workers, should not be regarded as conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker: 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it. Work singly, courageously, intelligently with all local help you can get and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.'

Q. If we are to start *khadi* work in the devastated areas in Noakhali, should we begin with financial and technical aid from outside or slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money alone?

A. I will say in your own words: 'Slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money', taking care to make yourself sure that you know the whole art of spinning in the widest sense I have given to the term. What that sense is you should learn from my writings, in the *Harijan* which you will do if you have the requisite eagerness.

Q. The cultivators and land-owners who used to have their land tilled by Muslim labour have lost two crops, namely *mucha* (long pepper) and *til* seeds and mustard seeds, owing to the loot of agricultural implements and bullocks and want of labour from Muslims. The time for ploughing fields for the next *boro* and *aus* crop is impending and unless the cultivators get these within fifteen days, they will almost lose that crop also.

A. This is most unfortunate if it is true. I have no doubt that all such land should be put under cultivation not only for the sake of the owners but also for the State, which is or should be more concerned with the cultivation of food crops even than the owners. Therefore the owners should ask the authorities for this assistance and the State should see to it that all such land is beneficially cultivated. It is the duty of the State to ask and encourage Muslim labour to render this

essential service whether the owner be a Muslim or a Hindu. The State should certainly see that all labour is adequately paid by fixing the wages.

Speech at Prayer Meeting  
Haryan, 2 Mar. 1947

## 251. CO-OPERATION OR DESTRUCTION

Gandhi Camp, Patna,  
April 18, 1947

If labourers aim at asserting their rights, they can do so only by co-operating with zamindars, not by harassing or killing them. Abolition of *zamindari* is not a very difficult task. We have only a handful of zamindars here. But if you take the law into your own hands you will be striking at the root of your own interests. You can place your complaints before the Government but you cannot take the law into your hands and resort to violence. One who seeks to destroy others invites one's own doom. There are numerous such instances. The best known is that of the Yadavas.<sup>1</sup> If you work whole-heartedly during your working hours, your employers will have to pay you your proper wages. But if you harass them in any manner you will not earn anybody's sympathy. I told the zamindars who were here a little while ago what I thought right and I tell you the same. It is my nature. I cannot act otherwise. I must tell you what I think proper.

Talk with Peasant and Labour Leaders (G.)  
*Bihari Komi Agman*, pp. 222-3

<sup>1</sup> Shri Krishna's kinsmen, who destroyed themselves in internecine fighting

## 252. A DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL SYSTEM

May 24, 1947

We may attain complete independence in the coming few days. However precious political independence may be, we



should not rest quiet till something tangible is done in terms of national welfare. We must now have such a social system from which exploitation will be completely eliminated and in which all work will be carried out in a democratic manner. Whatever may be the desire of the British or any other nation, it is not possible now to delay our independence which is just round the corner. If we are not vigilant in the intervening period, our condition will be like that of a typhoid patient. We nurse the typhoid patient while he is running temperature. But he needs to be really looked after only after the fever has come down. If the patient does not have proper care after his fever has come down he suffers a relapse and faces the danger of death. Such is going to be the period immediately after independence. If we want to qualify ourselves for independence we shall have to learn to put up with some hardships. We shall have to be large-hearted. We should be as accommodating as the ocean. The waters of many rivers and a lot of dirt from the banks go into it; many creatures live in it and a number of steamers sail on it and still it is considered sacred and we believe that we can wash away our sins by bathing in it. Even so, if we can be generous and ignore the harsh words of some people and even assaults by them, regarding them as our brethren, we shall become as sacred as the ocean.

We have won freedom through non-violence and truth. I am going around right now with the idea of creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and a feeling of equality. But I need your help in that work. Peace established with the help of the army and police is no peace at all, it conceals a smouldering fire of revolution. I have no doubt that if the police are away even for a little while this fire would burst into flames. Forced peace is no peace at all. The only way of removing fear is that every member of legislature and every minister should, along with his family, mix with the common people. The Hindu members should mix with the Muslim population and the Muslim members should mix with the Hindu population. Women should mix with other women and children should laugh, play and study with other children while the menfolk should, in the light of their own understanding, exchange views as to how best independent India can be served.

If this is done, I have no doubt that the standard of our

society would rise high. No minister will then think of himself as a ruler. No minister's wife would think of her husband as the boss of a particular department. And his children too would not think of themselves as minister's children. If even half a dozen ministers and their families in each State create such an atmosphere of mixing with the common people, I have no doubt that we would not be facing times like these. It is my personal knowledge that Shri Babu was more sociable before he became a minister. Today, when he has become a minister, his position is the same as mine was when I was in the grand mansion of the Aga Khan Palace.<sup>1</sup> I am not singling out Shri Babu. What I say applies to every minister. When they became ministers, they at once started having police guards at their gates. Now that they have become ministers, they have to get their guards ready in advance. How can they go about without body-guards? They have got themselves entangled now. While before they became ministers, if they wanted to go anywhere in the middle of the night they could jump out of their beds and start off. Frankly speaking, I pity the ministers and, if I should speak my own language, their condition is worse than that of prisoners.

Talk with Khaskars (G)

*Bihari Kanti Agman*, pp 398-400

<sup>1</sup> From 9 August 1942 to 6 May 1944

### 25.3. CONSTRUCTIVE TRAINING AND RURAL SELF-RULE

May 27, 1947

The very idea of partitioning the country is frightening. Our concern today should be to bring about an agreement in a peaceful manner to ensure that the country is not partitioned and still the British leave. Even partition may be tolerated, but I cannot bear the thought that it should be imposed by the British. Why should a third party intervene in a dispute between us brothers? Are we not strong enough even to solve our own problems? It is this which makes me feel that our *ahimsa* was not the *ahimsa* of the strong but something else. But

God has opened my eyes today. If we invite the British to act as intermediaries in the dispute between us brothers, it will be a great blot on our glorious history. That is why I declared in a prayer speech that, if we could not live together, we could certainly separate through mutual agreement, but that third-party intervention should not be tolerated. This is what I am going to tell the Viceroy today. This Viceroy is a very intelligent man. He will displease no party and still have his own way. This is, therefore, going to be a test for us all. Don't forget that Lord Mountbatten is taking measure of our courage and intelligence. As the saying is, a known enemy is better than an unknown friend. Lord Linlithgow or Lord Wavell were not dangerous to us, for we knew what their policy was.

I appreciate your desire to bring about equality of living standards in society. I want the same thing. But our first concern should be to come together, think what is in the best interest of the country and set the people to constructive work. Our people have lived in slavery for 150 years and need to be trained for a different way of life now. I do not fully agree with the idea that it will happen when we have power in our hands or that we can do a great deal through power. No doubt transfer of power will remove many obstacles. But we shall have to do solid work among the people. Since you look upon me as an adviser and seek my advice of your own free will, I have only one advice to give, and that is that if you wish to establish socialism, there is only one way in which it can be done: go and live among the poor in the villages, live as they live, be one with the village people, work for eight hours daily, use only village-made goods and articles even in your personal lives, remove illiteracy among the village people, eradicate untouchability and uplift the women. I will even go so far as to suggest that you should establish such a living bond with the village people that, if anyone amongst you is unmarried and wishes to marry, he or she should choose a partner from among the village girls or boys. If anybody else seeks your advice on this subject, give him or her, too, the same advice. Make your life an ideal one in this way; when the people see your transparent lives every minute of the day as clearly as we see pictures on a screen, their influence will be felt throughout the country and reform its life

The Congress will soon have power in its hands, but the Congress is not wedded to an exclusive doctrine and does not belong to any one party. Tolerance for all points of view still remains its principle. It is true that the principle is occasionally violated in practice, but even while making this admission I can assure you that if your workers can draw up a programme for village uplift and if the programme does not remain merely on paper but is actively implemented, then the Congress may be in power but the Congress Ministers will assuredly help you in your real solid work. Jawaharlal will even congratulate you with all his heart. I am, however, pained to say that, instead of doing such constructive work, what you are doing today is to incite the people and call for strikes. And at the same time there is communal fighting going on. All of you are men of intellect and learning. Why can't you see who is being harmed by what you are doing? Such a struggle was all right against the British, for we wanted them to go. But whom do you wish to drive out now? What will you gain by fighting against our own countrymen? You should be large-hearted and offer your co-operation for the great work of national uplift. If those in power commit mistakes, oppose them through your work, not by mere criticism or speeches or agitations.

Take the village people and slum-dwellers in your hands and give them the benefit of your knowledge, skill, insight, constructive work and patriotic spirit. Give the people this true education through the example of your own lives. Let all your activities be directed to the welfare of the people. If that is not done and if the people lose patience, our plight will be much worse than the present slavery. Before the people take to the path of destruction, see that they are given constructive, life-giving training. I make this suggestion not to you alone. I have opened out my heart to you because you have come to seek my advice. But what I have said applies to Congressmen, too. Let, therefore, all public workers and all officers of the Government forget their quarrels and disputes over ideologies and start learning and teaching spinning, *khadi* work and village industries. If the British leave and at the same time the people are given a new life through such education, I am confident that in five years India will be a leading country in Asia.

Q. Why do you oppose the growth of industries in our country through machinery?

A. You can use machines to manufacture cars, engines, aeroplanes and things of that kind. But I am strongly opposed to the use of machines for grinding corn, manufacturing cloth and ploughing the land. The consumption of mill-ground flour has deprived us of all vitality, for machine-grinding destroys all the vitamins. In the old days in Kathiawar we didn't have even water-taps. The women used to fetch water from the river, with shining pots resting on supports studded with bright beads; it would be early morning and the women thus had a sun-bath daily and that kept them healthy. They used to grind the corn in the early dawn, singing *bhajans* the while, including prayers to God. These simple innocent songs containing useful moral wisdom taught them some music and [the grinding] provided them exercise. Afterwards the whole family would go to work in the fields, so that hardly anybody knew what illness was or even the names of the diseases of lungs so widespread these days. In such a vast country, or say, rather, a family, containing a variety of communities and races, there is no need for machinery at all.

Machinery does the work in very little time and that is harmful in every way, physically and economically. With so much leisure on hand, the people get busy in mischief, for, as the saying is, an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Or they waste their time in cinemas and theatres. Many people argue with me and try to convince me that the cinema has an educative value. But the argument doesn't appeal to me at all. For one thing, sitting in a closed theatre one feels suffocated. I had been to such a theatre only once, when I was a small child. If I had my way, I would see to it that all the cinemas and theatres in India were converted into spinning halls and factories for handicrafts of all kinds. And what obscene photographs of actors and actresses are displayed in the newspapers by way of advertisement! Moreover, who are these actors and actresses if not our own brothers and sisters. We waste our money and ruin our culture at the same time.

If I was made Prime Minister of the country, these would be the first things I would do: I would stop all machine-driven

flour-mills and restrict the number of oil-pressing factories but install the indigenous mills all over the country. I might not destroy the existing textile mills, but certainly would not help them in any way and, in any case, would not permit new ones to be set up. I would close all the cinemas and theatres, though I might, as an exception, permit exhibition of pictures of educational value or showing scenes of natural beauty. But singing and dancing I would stop completely. I have great regard for dancing and music. I love music indeed. I may even claim that I understand what is good music and what is not. But I would surely prohibit music and dancing which tend to pervert the minds of young men and women. I would stop the sale of gramophone records. That is, I would suggest to the Government that it should impose heavy taxes on all such life-killing activities. Similarly, harmful drinks and drugs like liquors, tobacco and tea also should be heavily taxed so that their consumption would automatically decrease. Moreover, ideal villages which are self-reliant in regard to food, which have not a single flour-mill and in which the residents grow all the cotton they need and manufacture their own cloth, right up to the stage of stitching garments in their own homes, should be awarded prizes and exempted from all taxes. In such an ideal village, every resident will be his own policeman, his own doctor and his own watchman, and the people will have no time then to quarrel and fight among themselves.

See, I have given you so much time. What I have described is only my dream of a free India, an idle dream like Sheikh-challi's.<sup>1</sup> My heart was full and I, therefore, poured it out to you. At present, however, I see no sign of any of the things I have suggested being implemented. I know this and still I cannot keep back my thoughts, and so when people like you come I pour them out.

Q. But, Bapu, who would oppose the suggestion to make you Prime Minister? If you agree to accept the responsibility, I don't think anybody would oppose the proposal.

A. You are the chief opponents. You will ask me why. Well, if you but act as I have advised, my dream would no longer remain a dream but become a reality. You will have economic

equality in the country only along the road I have pointed out. Perhaps you will not understand this today; but note my words and remember them when I am dead and you will say that what this old man of seventy-five said was true. This is not a prophecy I am making; I am saying this on the basis of my lifelong experience. A time will surely come when nobody will listen to your long speeches; nobody will even attend your meetings, for preaching sermons to the people without following those principles in your own lives does not work long in society. The people will ask you for an account of your own work, will ask you what you yourselves are doing, before they listen to you. Similarly, in regard to the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity you will succeed only to the extent that you practise it in your own conduct and put your heart in it. Till now we acted like blind men and let ourselves be led by the hand by the British. But now we have to use our own eyes and find our own path. If you don't watch your step and walk straight ahead, you are bound to stumble and fall into pits.

Now be off. I have to go and see the Viceroy

Talk with Socialists (G )

*Bihar Pachhi Dilhi*, pp 14-19

<sup>1</sup> Character in a folk tale, one who indulges in idle dreams

## 254. CONSTRUCTIVE WORK AND TRAINING OF YOUTH

June 10, 1947

We ought to take warning from this.<sup>1</sup> If I could free myself from here, I would like to tour all over the country and launch a new movement among the youth to throw themselves into constructive work. I can see their enthusiasm to do something for the country. But it is getting no sustenance and there is every danger of its running into a wrong channel. I sensed the malady from which our country is suffering long ago. We, top leaders, are getting old. Before we pass away, we should devote whatever strength God has given us to train younger people to shoulder the responsibility of building up the India of our dreams just as we trained them before as non-violent

soldiers for the freedom struggle. People cannot be trained for the serious tasks ahead unless at least a portion of the top-ranking leaders remain outside the Government to work among the people.

Talk with Rajendra Prasad

*Mahatma Gandhi – The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 248

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the remarks of Hindu Mahasabha youths who had met Gandhi the same day

## 255 LEADERS AND LAWS

July 6, 1947

We shall never be able to raise the standard of public life through laws. We are not made that way. Only if the lives of the leaders, both private and public, are perfect will they be able to produce any effect on the people. Mere preaching will have no effect.

'A Letter' (G)

*Bihar Pachhi Dilli*, p. 285

## 256. POLITICS AND DHARMA

July 18, 1947

Is not politics too a part of *dharma*? It will have some effect on the people only if it is carried on with a sense of *dharma*. Politics also requires purity of conduct.

'A Letter' (G)

*Bihar Pachhi Dilli*, p. 350



257. LIVING FOR THE SAKE OF SERVICE

July 29, 1947

Anybody who wishes to serve always finds enough for his needs. He can indulge in no luxuries, of course. If, therefore, you wish to live in the Ashram for the sake of service, you should be content with whatever you get. Otherwise you should leave the Ashram and find a job. A person like you should have no difficulty in finding one. There is no third course open to a public servant.

'A Letter' (G)

*Bihar Pachhi Dilhi*, p. 440

258. UNIVERSAL SERVICE

On the Train,

July 31, 1947

Chi. Amrit,

Your last words were penetrating. Personal service when it merges into universal service is the only service worth doing. All else is rubbish.

Keep well and cheer up.

The journey is going well. Not a soul at the stations. Hence the night undisturbed.

Love,

BAPU

Letter to Amrit Kaur  
CW 3706

259. ACTIVE SERVICE

September 22, 1947

This heading has reference only to my duty about the conducting of the *Harijan* papers. A fair number of replies have

been received in answer to my query. The majority of the readers with a few exceptions want the papers to be continued. The purport of these letters is that the readers desire my views on present-day topics. This means that probably after my death these will no longer be required.

My death can take place in three ways:

1. The usual dissolution of the body.
2. Only the eyes move but the mind no longer works.
3. The body and mind may work but I may withdraw from all public activity.

The first kind overtakes everybody—some die today, others tomorrow. It demands no consideration.

The second variety is to be wished by or for nobody. I for one do not wish for any such imbecile state. It is a burden on earth.

The third variety does demand serious consideration. Some readers suggest that the period of my active life should be over now. A new age for India began on 15th August last. There is no place for me in that age. I detect anger in this advice as it is worded. It therefore carries little weight with me. Such counsellors are few. I have come to an independent conclusion. The *Harijan* papers are being conducted and published under the Navajivan Trust. The trustees can stop publication whenever they choose. They have full powers. They do not desire any such stoppage. My life-line is cast in active public service. I have not attained the state which is known as 'action in inaction'. My activity, therefore, seems at present to be destined to continue till the last breath. Nor is it capable of being divided into water-tight compartments. The root of all lies in Truth, otherwise known to me as non-violence. Hence the papers must continue as they are. 'One step enough for me.'

'My Duty' (G.)

*Harijan*, 28 Sept. 1947

*Harijanbandhu*, 28 Sept. 1947

260. THE VALUE OF CRITICS

New Delhi,  
October 20, 1947

Perhaps you don't know that I greatly value people who abuse me. Thereby their anger is spent and their hearts are cleansed. I like such critics a thousand times better than those who worship me, applaud me, but at the same time commit murders and disregard what I say. For those who abuse me are candid and if I can convince them they work wonders. In my life I have often had such experience.

Note to Manu Gandhi (G)<sup>1</sup>  
*Dilhuman Gandhiji*, Vol. I, pp. 124-5

<sup>1</sup> The addressee wanted to know why Gandhiji should care to reply to a man who only heaped abuses on him.

261. THOUGHT AS ACTION

New Delhi,  
October 16, 1947

A correspondent writes:

In your article 'My Duty' you say that you have not reached that state. The sentence looks simple enough but I would like you to expand the meaning a little.

There is a stage in life when a man does not need even to proclaim his thoughts, much less to show them by outward action. Mere thoughts act. They attain that power. Then it can be said of him that his seeming inaction constitutes his action. I must confess that I am far from that state. All I can say is that my striving is in that direction.

'Action in Inaction'  
*Haryana*, 26 Oct. 1947

## § 10. Socialism and Communism

### 262. BOLSHEVISM AND NON-VIOLENCE.

It is my good fortune and misfortune to receive attention in Europe and America at the present moment. It is my good fortune in that my message is being studied and understood in the West. It is my misfortune in that it is also being either unconsciously exaggerated or wilfully distorted. Every truth is self-acting and possesses inherent strength. I therefore remain unperturbed even when I find myself grossly misrepresented. A kind European friend has sent me a warning which shows, if the information given to him be true, that I am being either wilfully or accidentally misunderstood in Russia. Here is the message:

The Russian representative at Berlin, Mr. Krestinsky, would be asked by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to give an official welcome to Gandhi (?) and to 'profit by the situation to undertake Bolshevik propagandist activities among his followers'. Besides, Krestinsky would be given the task of inviting Gandhi to come to Russia. He is authorized to give a subsidy for the publication of propagandist literature among the oppressed peoples of Asia; and he is to found, for the purposes of the Oriental Club and Secretariat, a purse in the name of Gandhi, for students who are of his ideas (of the ideas of Gandhi or of those of Moscow?). Finally three Hindus would be enlisted in this work. All this is published in the Russian newspapers like the *Rul* of Oct. 18th.

The message gives the clue to the reports that I was likely to be invited to visit Germany and Russia. I need not say that I have received no such invitation at all, nor have I the slightest desire to visit these great countries. I am conscious of the fact that the truth for which I stand has not yet been fully accepted by India. It has not yet been fully vindicated. My work in India is still in the experimental stage. In such circumstances any foreign adventure on my part would be altogether premature. I should be fully satisfied if the experiment demonstrably succeeds in India.

My path is clear. Any attempt to use me for violent purposes is bound to fail. I have no secret methods. I know no

diplomacy save that of truth. I have no weapon but non-violence. I may be unconsciously led astray for a while but not for all time. I have therefore well-defined limitations, within which alone I may be used. Attempts have been made before now to use me unlawfully more than once. They have failed each time so far as I am aware.

I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short-violent-cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself. But my creed of non-violence not only does not preclude me but compels me even to associate with anarchists and all those who believe in violence. But that association is always with the sole object of weaning them from what appears to me to be their error. For experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence. Even if my belief is a fond delusion, it will be admitted that it is a fascinating delusion.

'My Path'

*Young India*, 11 Dec. 1924

### 263. THE YOKE OF BOLSHEVISM AND CAPITALISM

The following has been received from Mr. M. N. Roy in reply to my article on Bolshevism. I gladly publish it, but I cannot help saying that, if Mr. Roy's article is a correct representation of Bolshevism, it is a poor thing. I can no more tolerate the yoke of Bolshevism as described by Mr. Roy than of capitalism. I believe in conversion of mankind, not its destruction, and for a very obvious reason. We are all very imperfect and weak things and, if we are to destroy all whose ways we do not like, there will be not a man left alive. Mobocracy is

autocracy multiplied a million times. But I hope, I am almost sure, that real Bolshevism is much better than Mr. M. N. Roy's.

'Meaning of Bolshevism'

*Young India*, 1 Jan. 1925

## 264. THE BOLSHEVIK IDEAL AND EXPROPRIATION

Q. What is your opinion about the social economics of Bolshevism and how far do you think they are fit to be copied by our country?

A. I must confess that I have not yet been able fully to understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion there would be nothing like it. But from what I know of Bolshevism it not only does not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective State ownership of the same. And if that is so I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime in its present form cannot last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence. But be that as it may there is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain: the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes.

'My Notes' (G.)

*Navajivan*, 21 Oct. 1928

*Young India*, 15 Nov. 1928

## 265. AVOIDING CLASS WAR

If you will benefit the workers, the peasant and the factory hand, can you avoid class war?

I can, most decidedly, if only the people will follow the non-violent method. The past twelve months have abundantly shown the possibilities of non-violence adopted even as a policy. When the people adopt it as a principle of conduct, class war becomes an impossibility. The experiment in that direction is being tried in Ahmedabad. It has yielded most satisfactory results and there is every likelihood of its proving conclusive. By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of his capital. Nor need the worker wait for his conversion. If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Either is dependent on the other. Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer with the capitalist instead of remaining his slave. If he aims at becoming the sole owner, he will most likely be killing the hen that lays golden eggs.

Inequalities in intelligence and even opportunity will last till the end of time. A man living on the banks of a river has any day more opportunity of growing crops than one living in an arid desert. But if inequalities stare us in the face the essential equality too is not to be missed. Every man has an equal right to the necessities of life even as birds and beasts have. And since every right carries with it a corresponding duty and the corresponding remedy for resisting any attack upon it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duties and remedies to vindicate the elementary fundamental equality. The corresponding duty is to labour with my limbs and the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour. And if I would recognize the fundamental equality, as I must, of the capitalist and the labourer, I must not aim at his destruction. I must strive for his conversion.

My non-co-operation with him will open his eyes to the

wrong he may be doing. Nor need I be afraid of someone else taking my place when I have non-co-operated. For I expect to influence my co-workers so as not to help the wrongdoing of the employer. This kind of education of the mass of workers is no doubt a slow process, but as it is also the surest, it is necessarily the quickest. It can be easily demonstrated that destruction of the capitalist must mean destruction in the end of the worker and as no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption, no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil.

‘Questions and Answers’

*Young India*, 26 Mar. 1931

## 266. EXPROPRIATION AND SOCIALISM

July 25, 1934

QUESTION. The Karachi Congress passed a resolution laying down the fundamental rights of the people and, since it recognized private property, nationalist zamindars have supported the Congress. But the new Socialist Party in the Congress threatens the extinction of private property. How would it affect the Congress policy? Do you not think that this will precipitate class war? Will you prevent it?

ANSWER. The Karachi resolution can be altered only by an open session of the next Congress, but let me assure you that I shall be no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause. My object is to reach your hearts and convert you so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare.

I am aware of the fact that within the ranks of the Congress a new party called the Socialist Party is coming into being and I cannot say what would happen if that party succeeds in carrying the Congress with it. But I am quite clear that if a strictly honest and unchallengeable referendum of our millions were to be taken, they would not vote for wholesale expropriation of the propertied classes. I am working for the co-



operation and co-ordination of capital and labour and of landlords and tenants. It is open to you to join the Congress as much as it is open to the poorest by paying the fee of four annas and subscribing to the Congress creed.

But I must utter a note of warning. I have always told the mill-owners that they are not exclusive owners of the mills. Workmen are equal sharers in the ownership. In the same way, I would tell you that the ownership of your land belongs as much to the *ryots* as to you and you may not squander your gains in luxurious or extravagant living, but must use them for the well-being of the *ryots*. Once you make your *ryots* experience a sense of kinship with you and a sense of security that their interests as members of the family will never suffer at your hands, you may be sure that there cannot be a class war between you and them.

Class war is foreign to the essential genius of India which is capable of evolving a form of communism broad-based on the fundamental rights of all and equal justice to all. The *Ramarajya* of my dream ensures the rights alike of prince and pauper.

You may be sure that I shall throw the whole weight of my influence in preventing class war. I do not know what I am going to do after the termination of my self-imposed restriction on August 3, but I shall try my best to avoid going back to prison. But it is difficult to predict anything with certainty in a situation of which I am unaware today. But supposing that there is an attempt unjustly to deprive you of your property, you will find me fighting on your side

We propose to support Congress candidates in the next Assembly elections. But we have our misgiving about the policy they will adopt in the Assembly. Could you persuade the Parliamentary Board to dispel our fears?

I invite you to discuss this thing with the members of the Parliamentary Board. I know, however, that no member will talk of expropriation or extinction of private property. They will certainly insist on a radical reform in your relations with the *ryots* but that should be no new thing to you. Even Sir Malcolm Hailey and Lord Irwin appealed to you to realize

and live up to the spirit of the times. If you will only do this, you may be sure that we shall be able to evolve an indigenous socialism of the purest type.

Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it, for I know that the essential difference between man and brute is that the former can respond to the call of spirit in him and can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute and therefore superior to selfishness and violence which belong to brute nature and not to the immortal spirit of man.

That is the fundamental conception of Hinduism, which has years of penance and austerity at the back of the discovery of their truth. That is why whilst we had had saints who have burnt out their bodies and laid down their lives in order to explore the secrets of the soul, we have none as in the West who have laid down their lives in exploring the remotest or highest regions of earth. Our socialism or communism should therefore be based on non-violence and on the harmonious co-operation of labour and capital and the landlord and the tenant.

There is nothing in the Congress creed or policy that need frighten you. All your fears and misgivings, permit me to tell you, are those of a guilty conscience. Wipe out the injustice that you may have been consciously or unconsciously guilty of and shed all fear of the Congress and Congressmen.

Once you turn a new leaf in the relations between zamindars and *ryots*, you will find us on your side jealously guarding your private rights and property. When I say 'us', I have Pandit Jawaharlal also in mind, for I am sure that on this essential principle of non-violence there is no difference between us. He does indeed talk of nationalization of property, but it need not frighten you.

The nation cannot own property except by vesting it in individuals. It simply ensures its just and equitable use and prevents all possible misuse, and I do not think you can have any possible objection to holding your property for the benefit of the *ryots*. The *ryots* have themselves no greater ambition than to live in peace and freedom and they will never grudge

you your possession of property provided you use it for them.

'Answers to Zamindars'

*The Pioneer*, 3 Aug. 1934

## 267. VARNADHARMA AND TRUE SOCIALISM

September 23, 1934

This booklet is a collection of all my writings on *varnadharma*. Its printing was complete some or perhaps many months ago but it remained unpublished in the absence of an introduction. I had agreed to write the introduction but could not do so till now on account of my *Haryan* tour.

### I

I should have loved to go through all my speeches and writings on *varnashrama* during the past fifteen years before writing this introduction, but it was physically impossible. Perhaps it is well that I cannot do so. I have never made a fetish of consistency. I am a votary of truth and I must say what I feel and think at a given moment on the question, without regard to what I may have said before on it. The publisher too wants this. It is for the reader to find out how far my present views coincide with those formerly expressed. Wherever he finds that what I have said or written before runs contrary to what I am writing now, he should without hesitation reject the former. I do not claim omniscience. I claim to be a votary of truth and to follow to the best of my ability what seems to be the truth at a given time. As my vision gets clearer, my views must grow clearer with daily practice. Where I have deliberately altered an opinion, the change should be obvious, only a careful eye would notice a gradual and imperceptible evolution.

*Varnashramadharma* is a compound word known to all our vernaculars, and, though the word *dharma* (law) is related to both the components, *varna* and *ashrama*, the words are rarely used in separation. Hinduism is but another and imperfect name for *varnashramadharma*. The word 'Hindu' was apparently

coined by foreigners and has more geographical than any other content. The *dharma* (religion or law) that Hindus have professed to observe is *varnashramadharma*. To say that the *dharma* of the Hindus is Aryan does not carry us very far. It simply means that the Hindus, or those who lived in the east of the Indus or believed in the Vedic *dharma*, called themselves Aryas and others non-Aryas. To give our *dharma* this kind of ethnic label is in my opinion misleading. It should have a name that declares its predominant characteristic, and everyone will admit that Hinduism is nothing without the law of *varna* and *ashrama*. It would be impossible to find any *smriti* of which a large part was not devoted to *varnashramadharma*. This law of *varna* and *ashrama* is to be traced to our most ancient scriptures—the Vedas, and so no one who calls himself a Hindu may ignore it. It is his duty to study it in all its bearings, and to reject it if it is an excrescence, and to foster it and restore it to its pristine purity, if it represents a universal law.

So far as the law of *ashrama* is concerned, it is extinct, alike in profession and observance. Hinduism lays down four *ashramas* or stages—the life of a *brahmachari* (continent student), the life of a *grihastha* (householder), the life of a *vanaprastha* (who has retired) and the life of a *sannyasi* (renunciator) through which every Hindu has to pass to fulfil his purpose in life. But the first and the third are practically non-existent today, the fourth may be said to be observed in name to a small extent. The second is professed to be observed by all today, but it is observed in name, not in spirit. *Grihasthas* or householders of a kind we all are, inasmuch as we eat and drink and propagate our kind, like all created beings. But in doing so, we fulfil the law of the flesh and not of the spirit. Only those married couples who fulfil the law of the spirit can be said to observe the law of *grihastha-ashrama*. Those who live the mere animal life do not observe the law. The life of householders of today is one of indulgence. And as the four stages represent a ladder of growth and are interdependent, one cannot leap to the stage of a *vanaprastha* or a *sannyasi*, unless he or she fulfilled the law of the first two *ashramas*—*brahmacharya* and *grihastha*. The law of the *ashrama*, therefore, is a dead letter today. It can be revived only if the law of *varna*, with which it is intimately interlinked, is revived.

That brings us to a consideration of the law of *varna*. *Varna* can certainly be said to exist, though in a distorted form. There are four *varnas*, but the distortion that passes as *varna* today is divided into countless castes. All the four *varnas* are divided into numerous castes and sub-castes, but whilst those who belong to the first three are not ashamed to declare that they belong to them, those who belong to the fourth, viz., *Shudra*, prefer to declare the sub-caste as their label rather than their *varna*, which they regard as a badge of humiliation.

But labels never reveal a man's character, nor does the fact that a man clings to a label show that he deserves it. A black man will not be red, no matter how repeatedly he calls himself red. In the same way, one does not become a *Brahmin* by calling oneself a *Brahmin*. Not until a man reveals in his life the attributes of a *Brahmin* can he deserve that name. Considered in this light, *varna* may be said to be extinct. If we may, indeed, claim a label, we can call ourselves *Shudras*, though really we are not entitled to that name either, inasmuch as we do not observe the law of that *varna*. This law is the law of one's being, which one has to fulfil. The fulfilment should be spontaneous and no matter of honour or shame. How many are there who are fulfilling the law as law, i.e., spontaneously? We fulfil it because we cannot help it, we are all serfs, whether we will it or no. Let no one contend that *varna* exists today, because all the functions of the different *varnas* are being performed by someone or the other and somehow or the other. *Varna* is intimately, if not indissolubly, connected with birth, and the observance of the law of *varna* means the following on the part of us all the hereditary and traditional calling of our forefathers in a spirit of duty. Those who thus fulfil the law of their *varna* can be counted on one's fingers' ends. This performance of one's hereditary function is done as a matter of duty, though it naturally carries with it the earning of one's livelihood. Thus, the function of a *Brahmin* is to study and to teach the science of *Brahman* (or spiritual truth). He performs the function, as he cannot do otherwise, as it is the law of his being. That secures him his livelihood, but he will take it as a gift from God. A *Kshatriya* will perform the function of protecting the people in the same spirit, accepting for his livelihood whatever the people can afford to give him. A

*Vaishya* will pursue wealth-producing occupations for the welfare of the community, keeping for himself enough for his own maintenance and rendering the balance to the community in one shape or another. A *Shudra* will perform physical labour in the same spirit of service.

*Varna* is determined by birth, but can be retained only by observing its obligations. One born of *Brahmin* parents will be called a *Brahmin*, but if his life fails to reveal the attributes of a *Brahmin* when he comes of age, he cannot be called a *Brahmin*. He will have fallen from Brahminhood. On the other hand, one who is born not a *Brahmin* but reveals in his conduct the attributes of a *Brahmin* will be regarded as a *Brahmin*, though he will himself disclaim the label.

*Varna* thus conceived is no man-made institution but the law of life universally governing the human family. Fulfilment of the law would make life livable, would spread peace and content, end all clashes and conflicts, put an end to starvation and pauperization, solve the problem of population and even end disease and suffering.

But if *varna* reveals the law of one's being and thus the duty one has to perform, it confers no right, and the idea of superiority or inferiority is wholly repugnant to it. All *varnas* are equal, for the community depends no less on one than on another. Today *varna* means gradations of high and low. It is a hideous travesty of the original. The law of *varna* was discovered by our ancestors by stern austerities. They sought to live up to the law to the best of their capacity. We have distorted it today and have made ourselves the laughing-stock of the world. No wonder that we have today amongst the Hindus a section which is bending its energies to a destruction of the institution which in their opinion spells the ruin of the Hindus. And certainly one need have no mercy for the hideous distortion, which means nothing but destruction of Hinduism.

## II

I do not for a moment suggest that there should be no restrictions about food and drink or about marital relations. I do not myself regard it a duty to eat whatever is offered and in whatever company I should chance to be, and I regard it as nothing short of self-indulgence to marry according to one's

fancy. Strict restraint is the law of life and must, therefore, govern these relations no less than others. I hold that there are rules about diet. Man is not an omnivorous animal, nor may he pick up his mate wherever he likes. But restrictions on marital or social relations have nothing to do with *varnadharma*, which is a different thing altogether. I can conceive blameless marital relations between different *varnas*, and people of different *varnas* seated together to eat food permissible to all. There is evidence enough to show that in ancient times there were no watertight compartments between *varnas*, so far as marital and social relations went, and I have no doubt that, in making *varna* a mere matter of restrictions about food and drink and marriage, we have done Hinduism grave harm.

Though the law of *varna* is a special discovery of some Hindu seer, it has universal application. Every religion has some distinguishing characteristic, but if it expresses a principle or law, it ought to have universal application. That is how I look at the law of *varna*. The world may ignore it today but it will have to accept it in the time to come.

I would define the law briefly thus: The law of *varna* means that everyone shall follow as a matter of *dharma*-- duty--the hereditary calling of his forefathers, in so far as it is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics. He will earn his livelihood by following that calling. He may not hoard riches, but devote the balance for the good of the people.

The four *varnas* have been compared in the Vedas to the four members of the body, and no simile could be happier. If they are members of one body, how can one be superior or inferior to another? If the members of the body had the power of expression and each of them were to say that it was higher and better than the rest, the body would go to pieces. Even so, our body politic, the body of humanity, would go to pieces, if it were to perpetuate the canker of superiority or inferiority. It is this canker that is at the root of the various ills of our time, especially class-wars and civil strife. It should not be difficult for even the meanest understanding to see that these wars and strife could not be ended except by the observance of the law of *varna*. For it ordains that everyone shall fulfil the law of one's being by doing in a spirit of duty and service that to which one is born. Earning of livelihood is the necessary

result. But the law has to be fulfilled for its own sake. Its due observance by a large part of mankind will end the conflicting inequalities and give place to an equality in diversity. All callings would be equally reputable— whether that of the minister or of the lawyer, of the doctor or the leather-worker, of the carpenter or the scavenger, of the soldier or the trader, of the farmer or the spiritual teacher. In this ideal state of things, there would be no room for the monstrous anomaly of the three *varnas* lording it over the *Shudra*, or of the *Kshatriya* and the *Vaishya* enjoying themselves in their palaces and the *Brahmin* contenting himself with a cottage and the *Shudra* toiling for the rest and living in a hovel. This chaotic state of things indicates that the law of *varna* has become a dead letter.

When, if ever, the ideal state of things, as indicated above had been reached in India, I do not know. But I do hold that it is the only ideal state that is easy enough to approach and that it is not only for the Hindus but for the whole of humanity.

Under such dispensation, all property will be held by its respective holders in trust for the community. No one will claim it as his own. The King will hold his palace in trust for his people and will collect the taxes only to be used for the benefit of the people. He has the right to have no more than is enough to keep him; the rest belongs to, and shall be spent only for, the people. Indeed, he will, by virtue of his resourcefulness as a ruler, add to what he collects from the people and return it to them manifold. The *Vaishya* likewise is such a trustee. The *Shudra* is made so. Indeed, if one may have preference, the *Shudra*, who performs body-labour in a spirit of service and duty, who has nothing to call his own and who has no desire for ownership, is worthy of the world's homage; he is the lord of all because he is the greatest servant. The dutiful *Shudra* will, of course, repudiate any such claim, but the gods will shower their choicest blessings on him. One may not say this of the proletariat of the present day. They certainly own nothing, but I expect they covet ownership. The calling of labour and service is no pleasant duty to them. It is a painful task, for it does not satisfy even the cravings of the flesh. My praise is for the ideal labourer. It is the estate I have longed to attain.



But this duty of labour cannot be imposed on anybody. In fact, the panegyric may be uttered only by those of the three *varnas* who fulfil the law themselves, viz., the law of regarding and behaving themselves as the servants of the community and holding all the property in trust for it. The three *varnas* exist today only in name, they are supposed to invest one with a higher status than that of the *Shudras* and have ceased to imply any duty to be performed. There is nothing, therefore, to be surprised at, nor to be sorry for, when in such a state of things the *Shudras* should be jealous of the others' possessions and their estate and seek to share them. When the law of *varna* was discovered, there could be no compulsion from without. The world can only be sustained by a willing and dutiful observance of it.

In an age where competition is held to be the law of life, and possession in the largest measure of the world's goods the *summum bonum*, and when everyone counts oneself free to follow any calling one likes, this attempt to hold up *varna* as the law of life may well be regarded as an idle dream, and an attempt to revive it as childish folly. Be that as it may, it is my firm conviction that it is true socialism. In the language of the *Gita*, it is equality of the spirit, without which no other equality is possible. The performance of it, no matter how slight, bodes well both for him who performs it and for the rest of mankind.

I may add that, though the *varnas* are to be four, the number is not, in my opinion, unalterable. In the future reconstruction, the number may be more or even less than four. What is essential is that one must seek one's livelihood, and no more, from following the vocation to which one is born.

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

'Introduction to *Varnavyavastha*'

*Harijanbandhu*, 16 & 23 Sept. 1934

*Harijan*, 28 Sept. 1934

## 268. SOCIALISTS AND VIOLENCE

[Before 22 March 1935]

Dear Madeleine,

I have just read your letter to Pyarelal. Thank God I am about to observe complete silence, thus I can reply to your letter immediately. Yes, I ought to write a complete letter in reply to the long letter of the Sage<sup>1</sup> But the very adjective 'complete' frightens me. I have no time to compose a letter which will do sufficient justice to this letter from there. I must try to do it during my days of silence. Your question is simple. My opposition is to socialism as it is interpreted here in its official programme. I can have nothing to say against the theory or the philosophy of socialism. The programme as it is put here cannot be achieved without violence. The socialists here do not exclude violence under all circumstances whatsoever. They would take to arms openly if they saw there was a chance to usurp power by it. There are in the programme some details into which I need not enter. I wonder if this reply will answer your difficulties. However, you must write about your difficulties more concretely.

Love to you both.

BAPU

Letter to Madeleine Rolland  
CW 9737

<sup>1</sup> Romain Rolland

## 269. NON-VIOLENT COMMUNISM

[22 January 1937]

QUESTION: What do you think of communism? Do you think it would be good for India?

ANSWER: Communism of the Russian type, that is communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India. I believe in non-violent communism.

Q. But communism in Russia is against private property. Do you want private property?

A. If communism came without any violence, it would be welcome. For then no property would be held by anybody except on behalf of the people and for the people. The millionaire may have his millions, but he will hold them for the people. The State could take charge of them whenever they would need them for the common cause.

Q. Is there any difference of opinion between you and Jawaharlal in respect of socialism?

A. There is, but it is a difference in emphasis. He perhaps puts an emphasis on the result, whereas I put it on the means. Perhaps according to him I am putting over-emphasis on non-violence, whereas he, though he believes in non-violence, would want to have socialism by other means if it was impossible to have it by non-violence. Of course my emphasis on non-violence becomes one of principle. Even if I was assured that we could have independence by means of violence, I shall refuse to have it. It won't be real independence.

Q. But do you think the English will leave India to you and go back peacefully as a result of your non-violent agitation?

A. I do think so.

Q. What is the basis of your belief?

A. I base my faith in God and His Justice.

Q. You are more Christian than we so-called Christians. I will write these words down in block letters

A. You must, otherwise God would not be God of Love but God of violence.

Interview with an Egyptian  
*Haryan*, 13 Feb. 1937

## 270. IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALISM

July 27, 1937

Bhai Sampurnanand,

I had taken your book to Tithal, and had started reading it there. I finished it last Saturday, i.e., on July 24. I used to read it whenever I had a few minutes to spare. I have read it carefully from cover to cover. I like the book, the language is sweet but it might also be regarded a bit difficult for those totally unacquainted with Sanskrit. The glossary of English-Hindi and Hindi-English equivalents given at the end is useful for the student. It is laudable that arguments in favour of socialism have been put forward without any disparagement of others.

I have no difficulty in accepting almost all the principles of socialism propounded in the book. I have also read with care the book<sup>1</sup> by Jayaprakash. Can there possibly be any difference between his interpretation and yours? Neither in your book nor in his do I find a clear idea how the ultimate revolution in India will be brought about. This I could not understand even after discussing it with many others. Only the day before yesterday a report of Meherally's Madras speech came into my hands and I went through it. It explains fully what the socialists are doing. The object is to start a revolt in every sphere. But a revolt has never been possible without violence. In your book, however, I find nothing of the kind. Have we or have not we acquired strength through peaceful ways such as the civil disobedience or non-violent non-co-operation carried on since 1920?

You say that the principles of socialism cannot be fully implemented until we have State power. Supposing, you ask, a powerful land-owner turned a complete socialist, could he well and truly act upon his principles? Assuming that he had no punitive power, could an Indian raja who was a socialist be able to implement socialism? I recollect your having written that socialism cannot be practised in its entirety until the whole world turns socialist. Does this imply that even if we gain complete independence socialism will not be fully or almost fully implemented? I hope you have understood my

point. The purpose behind this question is only to ascertain how far it would be possible for me to accept the socialist principles and the means of their implementation.

You may reply to this letter at your leisure. I am in no hurry.

Yours,  
M. K. GANDHI

Letter to Sampurnanand (H.)  
CW 9940

<sup>1</sup> *My Socialism*

#### 271. SOCIALISM AND NON-VIOLENCE

Sevagram,  
April 14, 1940

The following draft resolution was sent to me by Shri Jayaprakash Narayan. He asked me, if I accepted his picture, to put it before the Working Committee at Ranigarh.

The Congress and the country are on the eve of a great national upheaval. The final battle for freedom is soon to be fought. This will happen when the whole world is being shaken by mighty forces of change. Out of the catastrophe of the European War, thoughtful minds everywhere are anxious to create a new world—a world based on the co-operative goodwill of nations and men. At such a time the Congress considers it necessary to state definitely the ideals of freedom for which it stands and for which it is soon to invite the Indian people to undergo the uttermost sufferings.

The free Indian nation shall work for peace between nations and total rejection of armaments and for the method of peaceful settlement of national disputes through some international authority freely established. It will endeavour particularly to live on the friendliest terms with its neighbours, whether they be great powers or small nations, and shall covet no foreign territory.

The law of the land will be based on the will of the people freely expressed by them. The ultimate basis of maintenance of order shall be the sanction and concurrence of the people.

The free Indian State shall guarantee full individual and civil

liberty and cultural and religious freedom, provided that there shall be no freedom to overthrow by violence the constitution framed by the Indian people through a Constituent Assembly.

The State shall not discriminate in any manner between citizens of the nation. Every citizen shall be guaranteed equal rights. All distinctions of birth and privilege shall be abolished. There shall be no titles emanating either from inherited social status or the State.

The political and economic organization of the State shall be based on principles of social justice and economic freedom. While this organization shall conduce to the satisfaction of the national requirements of every member of society, material satisfaction shall not be its sole objective. It shall aim at healthy living and the moral and intellectual development of the individual. To this end to secure social justice, the State shall endeavour to promote small-scale production carried on by individual or co-operative effort for the equal benefit of all concerned. All large-scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control, and in this behalf the State shall begin by nationalizing heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries. The textile industry shall be progressively decentralized.

The life of the villages shall be reorganized and the villages shall be made self-governing units, self-sufficient in as large a measure as possible. The land laws of the country shall be drastically reformed on the principle that land shall belong to the actual cultivator alone, and that no cultivator shall have more land than is necessary to support his family on a fair standard of living. This will end the various systems of landlordism on the one hand and farm bondage on the other.

The State shall protect the interests of the classes, but when these impinge upon the interests of those who have been poor and down-trodden, it shall defend the latter and thus restore the balance of social justice.

In all State-owned and State-managed enterprises, the workers shall be represented in the management through their elected representatives and shall have an equal share in it with the representatives of the Government.

In the Indian States, there shall be complete democratic government established, and in accordance with the principles of abolition of social distinction and equality between citizens, there shall not be any titular heads of the States in the persons of Rajas and Nawabs.

This is the order which the Congress envisages and which it shall work to establish. The Congress firmly believes that this order shall bring happiness, prosperity and freedom to the people of all races

and religions in India who together shall build on these foundations a great and glorious nation.

I liked it and read his letter and the draft to the Working Committee. The Committee, however, thought that the idea of having only one resolution for the Ramgarh Congress should be strictly adhered to, and that the original, as framed at Patna, should not be tampered with. The reasoning of the Committee was unexceptionable, and the draft resolution was dropped without any discussion on merits. I informed Shri Jayaprakash of the result of my effort. He wrote back suggesting that he would be satisfied if I could do the next best thing, namely, publish it with full concurrence or such as I could give it.

I have no difficulty in complying with Shri Jayaprakash's wishes. As an ideal to be reduced to practice as soon as possible after India comes into her own, I endorse in general all except one of the propositions enunciated by Shri Jayaprakash.

I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed. But my socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakeable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred. Unfortunately, Western socialists have, so far as I know, believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialistic doctrines.

I have always held that social justice, even unto the least and the lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed that it is possible by proper training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means is non-violent non-co-operation. At times non-co-operation becomes as much a duty as co-operation. No one is bound to co-operate in one's own undoing or slavery. Freedom received through the effort of others, however benevolent, cannot be retained when such effort is withdrawn. In other words, such freedom is not real freedom. But the lowliest can feel its glow as soon as they learn the art of attaining it through non-violent non-co-operation.

It therefore gladdens me to find Shri Jayaprakash accept-

ing, as I read his draft, non-violence for the purpose of establishing the order envisaged by him. I am quite sure that non-violent non-co-operation can secure what violence never can, and this by ultimate conversion of the wrong-doers. We in India have never given non-violence the trial it has deserved. The marvel is that we have attained so much even with our mixed non-violence.

Shri Jayaprakash's propositions about land may appear frightful. In reality they are not. No man should have more land than he needs for dignified sustenance. Who can dispute the fact that the grinding poverty of the masses is due to their having no land that they can call their own?

But it must be realized that the reform cannot be rushed. If it is to be brought about by non-violent means, it can only be done by education both of the haves and the have-nots. The former should be assured that there never will be force used against them. The have-nots must be educated to know that no one can really compel them to do anything against their will, and that they can secure their freedom by learning the art of non-violence, i.e., self-suffering. If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses.

Whilst, therefore, I have no difficulty in generally endorsing Shri Jayaprakash's proposition in terms of non-violence, I cannot endorse his proposition about the Princes. In law they are independent. It is true that their independence is not worth much, for it is guaranteed by a stronger party. But as against us they are able to assert their independence. If we come into our own through non-violent means, as is implied in Shri Jayaprakash's draft proposals, I do not imagine a settlement in which the Princes will have effaced themselves. Whatever settlement is arrived at the nation will have to carry out in full. I can therefore only conceive a settlement in which the big States will retain their status. In one way this will be far superior to what it is today; but in another it will be limited so as to give the people of the States the same right of self-government within their States as the people of the other parts of India will enjoy. They will have freedom of speech, a free



Press and pure justice guaranteed to them. Perhaps Shri Jayaprakash has no faith in the Princes automatically surrendering their autocracy. I have. First because they are just as good human beings as we are, and secondly because of my belief in the potency of genuine non-violence. Let me conclude, therefore, by saying that the Princes and all others will be true and amenable when we have become true to ourselves, to our faith, if we have it, and to the nation. At present we are half-hearted. The way to freedom will never be found through half-heartedness. Non-violence begins and ends by turning the searchlight inward.

'Jayaprakash's Picture'

*Harijan*, 20 Apr. 1940

## 272 REVOLUTION IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

January 24, 1946

QUESTION: What exactly do you mean by economic equality? What is statutory trusteeship as conceived by you?

Gandhiji's reply was that economic equality of his conception did not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. For instance, he required two shawls in winter whereas his grand-nephew Kanu Gandhi who stayed with him and was like his own son did not require any warm clothing whatsoever. Gandhiji required goat's milk, oranges and other fruit. Kanu could do with ordinary food. He envied Kanu but there was no point in it. Kanu was a young man whereas he was an old man of 76. The monthly expense of his food was far more than that of Kanu but that did not mean that there was economic inequality between them. The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So the real meaning of economic equality was: 'To each according to his need.' That was the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children, that would be a violation of economic equality. Gandhiji continued:

Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying

that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument. The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign Government and also by their own countrymen—the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief.

That constituted his picture of economic equality. He did not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessities but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between class-war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation and therefore without exploitation. The State would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it. He concluded:

Supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow, all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees. But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with *gram panchayats*, will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above, it is liable to prove a dead weight.

Q. What is the difference between your technique and that of the communists or socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?

The socialists and communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to that end they believe in

generating and accentuating hatred. They say, when they get control over the State, they will enforce equality. Under my plan, the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception if I am the owner of fifty motor-cars or even of ten *bighas* of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it.

Q What is the place of *satyagraha* in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?

The same as against the foreign power. *Satyagraha* is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family, its use can be extended to every other circle. Supposing a land-owner exploits his tenants and mulct's them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him, he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants, or those who have espoused their cause and have influence, will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit, if asked to do so, but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself, and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then con-

tinue till the replaced tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus *satyagraha* is a process of educating public opinion such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure.

Answers to Questions at Constructive Workers' Conference, Madras  
*The Hindu*, 26 Jan. 1946  
*Haryana*, 31 Mar. 1946

### 273. RESPECTING DIFFERENCES WITH COMMUNISTS

Madras,  
 January 24, 1946

If the report about the damage to communist persons and properties is true, I consider it disgraceful. Whatever may be the differences between communists and others, they must be respected, as others will wish theirs to be respected. Every act of popular violence is detrimental to the people's progress.

Fragment of an Interview  
*The Hindu*, 26 Jan. 1946

### 274. SOCIALISM, FREEDOM, AND NON-VIOLENCE

Panchgani,  
 [17 July 1946]

LOUIS FISCHER: I would go into the Constituent Assembly and use it for a different purpose—as a battle-field—and declare it to be a sovereign body. What do you say to this?

GANDHIJI: It is no use declaring somebody else's creation a sovereign body. After all, it is a British creation. A body does not become a sovereign body by merely asserting it. To become sovereign, you have to behave in a sovereign way. Three

tailors of Tooley Street in Johannesburg declared that they were a sovereign body. It ended in nothing. It was just a farce.

I do not consider the proposed Constituent Assembly to be non-revolutionary. I have said, and I mean it cent per cent, that the proposed Constituent Assembly is an effective substitute for civil disobedience of the constructive type. Whilst I have the greatest admiration for the self-denial and spirit of sacrifice of our Socialist friends, I have never concealed the sharp difference between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non-violence through and through.

I. F. You are a socialist and so are they.

G. I am, they are not. I was a socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid socialist in Johannesburg, but that is neither here nor there. My claim will live when their socialism is dead.

I. I. What do you mean by your socialism?

G. My socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body.

L. F. Yes, but there are variations. My socialism in its modified form means that the State does not own everything. It does in Russia. There you certainly do not own your body even. You may be arrested at any time, though you may have committed no crime. They may send you wherever they like.

Does not, under your socialism, the State own your children and educate them in any way it likes?

G. All States do that. America does it.

L. F. Then America is not very different from Russia.

G. But socialism is dictatorship or else arm-chair philosophy. I call myself a communist also.

L. F. Oh, don't. It is terrible for you to call yourself a communist. I want what you want, what Jaiprakash and the socialists want: a free world. But the communists don't. They want a system which enslaves the body and the mind.

G. Would you say that of Marx?

L. F. The communists have corrupted the Marxist teaching to suit their purpose.

G. What about Lenin?

L. F. Lenin started it. Stalin has since completed it. When the communists come to you, they want to get into the Congress and control the Congress and use it for their own ends.

G. So do the socialists. My communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two. Communism, as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of socialism.

L. F. Yes, you are right. There was a time when the two could not be distinguished. But today socialists are very different from communists.

G. You mean to say, you do not want communism of Stalin's type.

L. F. But the Indian communists want communism of the Stalin type in India and want to use your name for that purpose.

G. They won't succeed.

L. F. So you will not yourself go into the Constituent Assembly, but will support it?

G. Yes, but it is wrong to say we are going into the Constituent Assembly to seize power. Though it is not a sovereign body, it is as near it as possible.

L. F. Pandit Jawaharlal said that if the British tried to impose a treaty in terms of the State Paper of May 16, he will tear it up.

G. Yes, an imposed treaty from outside.

L. F. And he said, Congress will not go into groupings.

G. Yes, I have said the same thing unless the Federal Court or some other court gives a different decision. As I see it, much can come out of the Constituent Assembly, if the British will play the game.

L. F. You say and I believe they will. But supposing they do not, won't you then offer your form of protest?

G. Not until the conditions are favourable. But it is wrong to speculate about the future, still more so to anticipate failure. If we take care of the present, the future will take care of itself.

They then passed on to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhiji startled his visitor by proffering the remark that the Hindu-Muslim question, in the final analysis, was an offshoot of the untouchability question.

When Hinduism is perfectly reformed and purged of the last trace of untouchability, there will be no communal problem left.

L. F. I have heard that though the Congress *Harijans* have won at the elections against non-Congress *Harjans*, they were able to do so only with the Hindu votes!

G. What was the joint election for, if not to enable the caste Hindus to make a selection from successful candidates at the primary elections? No failed candidate at the primary elections can offer himself as a candidate at the joint elections. Moreover, it is not correct to say, as has been claimed, that in

the majority of cases, the Congress *Harijans* won against the non-Congress candidates with the caste Hindus' votes. In Madras the non-Congress *Harijans* were defeated almost to a man in the primary elections wherever they contested them. In the majority of cases the Congress *Haryans* were returned unopposed.

L. F. Some of them want separate electorates.

G. Yes. But we have resisted it. By separate electorates they put themselves outside the pale of Hinduism and perpetuate the bar sinister.

L. F. That is true. But, anyhow they might say that Hindus have put them outside the pale.

G. But today the Hindus are penitent.

L. F. Are they adequately penitent?

G. I am sorry to say not yet. If they were, there would be no untouchability and no communal problem as I have already said.

L. F. Is there less social contact between the Hindus and Muslims?

G. No, rather the contrary. But politically there is a bar, thanks to Lord Minto.

L. F. Your young men are too Indo-centric.

G. That is only partly true. I won't say we have become international, but we have taken up forlorn causes, e.g., the cause of the exploited nations, because we are ourselves the chief exploited nation.

L. F. The growing anti-white feeling here is bad. In the Taj Mahal Hotel they have put up a notice 'South Africans not admitted'. I do not like it. Your non-violence should make you more generous.



G. That won't be non-violence. Today the white man rules in India. So, if the Taj Mahal has the gumption to put up that notice, it is a feather in its cap.

L. F. That is what any nationalist will say. You must say something better.

G. Then I will be a nationalist for once. They have no right to be here if they do not deal with Indians on terms of equality.

L. F. No right yes. But you must give them more than their right. You must invite them

G. Yes, when I am the Viceroy.

L. F. You mean the President of the Indian Republic.

G. No I will be quite content to be the Viceroy, a constitutional Viceroy, for the time being. The first thing I will do will be to vacate the Viceregal Lodge and give it to the *Harrjans*. I will then invite the South African white visitors to my hut and say to them: 'You have ground my people to powder. But we won't copy you. We will give you more than you deserve. We won't lynch you as you do in South Africa', and thus shame them into doing the right

L. F. There is so much anti-white feeling today.

G. Of course, I am opposed to that. It can do no good to anybody.

L. F. The world is so divided. And there might be another war and that may be between the coloured and the white races.

G. Europe seems to be heading for another war. It is not sufficiently exhausted.

L. F. Europe is terribly exhausted. But with the atom bomb human beings don't matter so much. A few scientists are enough. The next war will be carried on by pressing a few buttons. That is why colour war is so dangerous.

c. Anything is better than cowardice. It is violence double distilled.

And to illustrate his remark Gandhiji narrated the story of a Negro clergyman with a Herculean frame in South Africa saying 'pardon me brother', when insulted by a white man, and sneaking into a coloured man's compartment.

That is not non-violence. It is a travesty of Jesus' teaching. It would have been more manly to retaliate.

L. F. You are not afraid of what happens to you but what it may mean to others. It takes a great deal of irresponsibility to give vent to your feelings and slap the white man under the circumstances described by you. In India the situation is different. The white men are not so numerous here.

g. You are mistaken. Why, one Englishman is killed and a whole village is razed to the ground as a reprisal. What vindictiveness!

Interview with Louis Fischer  
*Haryan*, 4 Aug. 1946

## 275. THE SOCIALIST IDEAL

Gandhi Camp, Patna,  
April 15, 1947

Socialism is a term of the modern age but the concept of socialism is not a new discovery. Lord Krishna preaches the same doctrine in the *Gita*. One need have in one's possession only what one requires. It means that all men are created by God and therefore entitled to an equal share of food, clothing and housing. It does not require huge organizations for the realization of this ideal. Any individual can set about to realize it. First of all, in order to translate this ideal into our lives we should minimize our needs, keeping in mind the poorest of the poor in India. One should earn just enough to support oneself and one's family. To have a bank balance would thus be incompatible with this ideal. And whatever is earned should

be earned with the utmost honesty. Strict restraint has to be kept over small matters in our lives. Even if a single individual enforces this ideal in his life, he is bound to influence others. Wealthy people should act as trustees of their wealth. But if they are robbed of this wealth through violent means, it would not be in the interest of the country. This is known as communism. Moreover, by adopting violent means we would be depriving society of capable individuals.

Talk with Manu Gandhi (G.)

*Bharam Komu Agman*, pp. 201-2

## 276. TRUE SOCIALISTS

Patna,

April 28, 1947

If we could shake off our lethargy we would be true socialists. But we haven't yet done that. If I were to ask you I am sure to get the reply that all fifteen of you have servants in your homes.<sup>1</sup>

Well, then I fail to understand your desire to serve others which you call socialism – when you do not do your own personal work in your homes. If you want my advice, I may tell you that students while they are studying should not involve themselves in any ism. They may by all means read about every school of thought, think over it, put as much of it into practice as possible, but they should not endeavour to become leaders. If we want to banish exploitation and violence from our society, we ought to do body-labour and manual work. And naturally it ought to be undertaken by all. Unemployment is rampant in our villages which were once regarded as happy and self-sufficient units; this is because of our subjugation and feelings of high and low as also caste distinctions.

Our political slavery is now nearly coming to an end. Hence, we now need to become all the more vigilant and in this process the students can prove very helpful. For example, (1) when you get up in the morning you can roll up your own bedding; (2) help in preparing your breakfast and milk, etc.,

whatever you take, without waiting for your mother or anyone else to prepare it and serve you; (3) give a helping hand in sweeping and scrubbing; (4) do your own laundering; (5) help your mother with the cooking and cleaning the dishes; (6) make your own cloth by spinning regularly every day; (7) keep your books clean and neatly arranged, economize on exercise-books as much as possible; (8) learn to do with a pen-holder and ink costing two annas, instead of a fountain-pen costing Rs. 50.

If you adopt a number of such rules in your life you will not need to bother with any ism. And if every student in the country does it, I am sure the guardians' burden will be lightened a thousand times and without making any other effort we will be called socialists. But I doubt if you will follow what I say. All the same, when you return home please reflect if there is any sense in the few lines that this experienced old fellow wrote out for you on his day of silence.

'Advice to Students' (G.)

*Biharni Kōmī Agman*, pp. 270 1

<sup>1</sup> All replied in the affirmative

## 277. NON-VIOLENCE, EQUALITY, AND TRUSTEESHIP

New Delhi,  
May 25, 1947

The leaders and followers of the League do not believe in attaining their object through non-violence. In such circumstances, how is it possible to melt their hearts or to convince them of the evil of violent action?

Violence can be effectively met only by non-violence. This is an old established truth. The questioner does not really understand the working of non-violence. If he did, he would have known that the weapon of violence, even if it was the atom bomb, became useless when matched against true non-violence. That very few understand how to wield this mighty

weapon is true. It requires a lot of understanding and strength of mind. It is unlike what is needed in military schools and colleges. What it requires is purity of the mind. The difficulty one experiences in meeting *himsa* with *ahimsa* arises from weakness of the mind. Moreover, let us not forget the Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah has, in his interview to the delegation from the Frontier Province, stated explicitly that it was not proper to resort to violence for attaining their rights, i.e., Pakistan.

Today many people are beginning to feel that a clash, possibly of a violent character, with the supporters of the League is inevitable. The nationalists feel that until the League agrees to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab, its demand for Pakistan is unjust. What means should they adopt to meet the situation?

If the answer to the first question is held valid, the second question does not arise. However, the question may be discussed for a clearer understanding. If the majority of the Muslims obey Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, a violent conflict should be out of the question, or if the majority of the Hindus take their stand on non-violence, no matter how much violence the Muslims use, it is bound to fail. One thing, however, should be perfectly understood. The votaries of non-violence cannot harbour violence even in thought, let alone doing it. If Pakistan is wrong, partition of Bengal and the Punjab will not make it right. Two wrongs will not make one right.

The majority of the Socialists claim that if there was a socialist revolution the economic question would come to the forefront throwing the communal conflict in the background. Do you agree? If such a revolution takes place, will it promote the establishment of the Kingdom of God which you call *Ramrajya*?

The socialist revolution you envisage is likely to make the Hindu-Muslim tension less acute. It is common knowledge that there are quite a few things at the root of our troubles. Even the end of the Hindu-Muslim conflict will not end all our troubles. It might be said that the Hindu-Muslim conflict has assumed a formidable form and the end of other petty conflicts would undoubtedly reduce the danger. What is happening is this. With the end of slavery and the dawn of freedom, all the weaknesses of society are bound to come to the

surface. I see no reason to be unnecessarily upset about it. If we keep our balance at such a time, every tangle will be solved. As far as the economic question is concerned it has to be solved in any case. Today there is gross economic inequality. The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no *Ramarajya* in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat. I accepted the theory of socialism even while I was in South Africa. My difference with the Socialists and others consists in advocating non-violence and truth as the most effective means for any reform.

You say that a raja, a zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exists today? Or do you expect them to be so transformed?

I think that some very few exist even today, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present rajas and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. I think it is worth while entertaining such a hope. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When Panchayat Raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the rajas can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate, what can a raja, a zamindar or a capitalist do? In a Panchayat Raj only the Panchayat will be obeyed and a Panchayat can work only through the law of its making. If the Panchayat follows non-violence in conducting its business, all the three would become trustees by law and if it resorts to violence it would mean the end of their power.

'Question Box' (H.)

*Harijan Sevak*, 1 June 1947

*Haryan*, 1 June 1947

## 278. COMMUNIST PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

June 8, 1947

I will tell you the same thing that I told those Socialist friends on two days.<sup>1</sup> All of you should think first of the interest of the country as a whole. Instead of doing that, you are wasting your time over minor grievances. The moment you come upon some error by somebody, real or imaginary, without any investigation you Communists start making inflammatory speeches, denounce the Government and incite the people. Is there not a single act of Government deserving your co-operation? Just think for a moment. If you were in the place of Nehru, what would you do? You should, therefore, either take the places of Nehru or Sardar- I stand guarantee that they will step down the moment you ask them to do so--or co-operate with them. That will be for your own good. In any case you should stop making speeches full of baseless allegations.

Your principles are fine indeed. But you do not seem to follow them in practice, for you do not seem to know the difference between truth and falsehood or justice and injustice. What is more saddening about you is that, instead of having faith in India and drawing inspiration from its unrivalled culture, you wish to introduce Russian civilization here as if Russia was your motherland. I disapprove of relying on any outside power, however much that may materially benefit us, for I believe in the principle that your eating is not going to satisfy my hunger, that I can satisfy my hunger only by eating myself. I tell Rajendra Babu the same thing every day, that in the matter of food we should not depend upon any foreign country. It would be more honourable for us to share among ourselves the food that we have than to live on other people's charity.

Let us be worthy of our freedom. We may certainly accept useful and beneficial ideas from foreign countries, but this does not mean that we should uncritically admire everything foreign. There are good and bad things in every country. It is a grave error to believe that everything in our country is bad and in other countries good. Some things in foreign countries are good while some features of our culture are unrivalled.

You also use the word '*satyagraha*' as part of your jargon. But anybody who uses this word should realize that by doing so he accepts a great responsibility. A *satyagrahi* should rely wholly on truth. He cannot then afford to be ambiguous in his attitudes. He cannot jump on to a bandwagon. In brief, he cannot depart from his principles in the smallest degree. A *satyagrahi* cares for nothing but truth. He will give no pain or do no injustice whatever to anybody either in thought, word or deed. And he must always have perfect clarity in his thoughts.

All of you are servants of the country and are eager to serve it. Such as we are, we are brothers and sisters born in the same country. As such, we should supplement one another's work, give up slandering one another and stop fruitless arguments, be generous and mutually forgiving. Let us give up our narrow-mindedness, cultivate generosity of heart and raise the good name of the country to the highest point in the whole world. In that lies everybody's happiness, peace and prosperity.

All of you are like my own children. Since you heard me patiently, I poured out my heart to you. You can come to me whenever you wish. I want your help. I can do something only if I have it. What can I do by myself? One cannot clap with only one hand, as the saying is.

'Talk with Communist Workers (G)  
*Bihar Pachhu Dilhi*, pp. 102-4

<sup>1</sup> On 27 May and 7 June

## 279. PREACHING SOCIALISM AND SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Delhi,

July 2, 1947

If you want to hear the few things that I have come to tell you please maintain silence.

Yesterday your Vice-President came and invited me to this conference. I had not known till then that Jayaprakash was the President of the conference. When people persisted I was



in a fix. It would not be right to refuse. Drawn by your love, I was forced to come. The police tie us up in iron chains, but the bond of love, in the words of Mirabai, though fragile and tenuous, is stronger than any iron chain. And drawn by this bond I came here punctually at a quarter past eight. Here I shall speak out a few things. It has become a fashion these days to call oneself a socialist. It is a mistaken notion that one can serve only if one carries a label of some 'ism'. I have been studying the question since the time when Jayaprakash perhaps had not even been born.

Some fifty years ago when I used to practise law in South Africa there were many people there who called themselves socialists but in fact they were less socialist than I was. I used to work among the coolies. I had made this work my life's mission and I lived as the coolies lived. I have always considered myself a servant of the workers and peasants but I have never found it necessary to call myself a socialist. My socialism is of a different kind.

Even if everyone forsakes me I shall not be worried. I am your friend and, therefore, I tell you that if a cripple cannot obtain something he needs we should ourselves give up that something. I shall first watch the cripple's life and his food and only then shall I think of doing something for myself. 'I his is my socialism. If you want to bring about this kind of socialism, then I shall be the first to come forward to help. It is my firm belief that even a king can become a socialist by being a servant of his people.

If we want to make the king as well as the people socialist, how shall we set about it? We can convert others to socialism by setting an example ourselves. It is said that there are two ways of changing the king. Either by cutting off his head or by depriving him of his throne. My method is to make the king a socialist through love. It is heinous to kill. If you teach thousands of people to kill, the order that you will bring about will not be a socialistic order but an order of murderers. The Viceroy can call himself a Congressman as the speaker calls himself a Congressman. But would the Viceroy be ready to give up his powers if he were asked to do so? Similarly there are many people who call themselves Congressmen but are they indeed Congressmen? Are they true socialists? There are

many who have drowned themselves in their wealth and in the pleasures which wealth can buy.

I firmly hold to truth and love. By love I do not mean the kind of bond that binds husband and wife or father and son, for this depends on self-interest. By love I mean that bond which binds the devotee to God.

In South Africa although the Whites<sup>d</sup> treated me as an enemy, nevertheless many of them came to me as friends. If socialism means turning enemies into friends I should be considered a genuine socialist. This idea of socialism is my own. All the socialists should learn socialism from me. Only then shall we be able to produce dedicated workers and bring about peasants' rule. I do not believe in the kind of socialism that the Socialist Party preaches. Maybe my preaching to you is a cry in the wilderness, maybe you will not listen to me. There are people who call me names and treat me as a madman. I cannot teach you violence because I do not believe in violence. I can only teach you not to bow your head even if you should lose your life. Therein lies true courage. Nobody can take away this courage from me. When I die you will all admit that Gandhi was a true socialist.

When I talk of trusteeship people call me mad. But there is something in that madness. If you think a little deeply you will understand it. Today I can say with conviction that if there is anyone among all these people who is a socialist it is I. And this gives me the right to say what I am saying. The public life and the private life of a public servant are interrelated. Socialism cannot be established without moral purity. Socialism has been in vogue ever since the time of Lord Krishna. He played with the cowherds. He lived with them, ate with them; he went along with Sudama to cut firewood in the forest for the wife of his preceptor. There are many such instances. He even became the charioteer of Arjuna to show that there was no one high or low for him. He comported with the cowherd maidens freely for there was no impurity in his eyes. Thus what you call socialism, the thing which you think you should learn from Russia or America or England, has been there in our country for a very long time.

Jayaprakash is like a son to me and the other leaders of the Socialist Party are all my friends. I humbly want to tell them

that if they adopt the kind of socialism I have described the whole country will be with them. I regret I cannot support the theory of socialism you accept, for I know that those who advocate it do not conform to it in their lives. Their precepts and practice vary. It will not do merely to preach. Rama spent fourteen years in exile in the forest and we worship him. But if he had not done so and merely contented himself with saying that a son should obey his father, who would have remembered him today? Today there is murder, plunder and rap in the air. My voice is not heard. People consider me mad. I am expected to teach how to return two blows for one but I cannot do so. All I can say is: 'Friend, if you want to kill me you may do so, but I will kill no one.' I pray to God that He may keep me filled with this courage to the end. One who has cultivated such courage cannot be plundered. When Gandhi is dead you will all say Gandhi was a socialist. I say it humbly but with conviction because I have full sixty years' experience to back it.

Speech at Delhi Provincial Political Conference (H.)  
*Gandhiji's Delhi Diary*, Vol. III, pp. 188-90

## 280. CONVERSION TO SOCIALISM

New Delhi,  
 July 6, 1947

Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware in socialism all the members of society are equal - none low, none high. In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. That is socialism.

In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity.

Looking at society all the world over there is nothing but duality or plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. This man is high, that one is low, that one is a Hindu, that one a

Muslim, third a Christian, fourth a Parsi, fifth a Sikh, sixth a Jew. Even among these there are sub-divisions. In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.

In order to reach this state we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the further it must recede from us.

Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste.

This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employee. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and *vice versa*. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.

Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialistic. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible.

'Who Is A Socialist?' (G.)

*Harijan*, 13 July 1947

*Harijanbandhu*, 13 July 1947

## 281. SOCIALISM AND SATYAGRAHA

New Delhi,  
July 13, 1947

Truth and *ahimsa* must come alive in socialism. This can only be possible when there is a living faith in God. Mere mechanical adherence to truth and *ahimsa* is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence have I said that truth is God.

Thus God is a living Force. Our life is of that Force. That Force resides in the body, but is not the body. He who denies the existence of that great Force denies to himself access to its inexhaustible power and thus remains impotent. He is like a rudderless ship which, tossed about here and there, perishes without making any headway. Many find themselves in this plight. The socialism of such people does not reach anywhere, what to say of the millions.

If such be the case, why is there no socialist who believes in God? If there are such socialists why have they not made any progress? Also there have been many believing in God; why is it they have not succeeded in bringing socialism?

There is no effective answer to this. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that it has perhaps never occurred to a believing socialist that there is any connection between his socialism and his belief in God. Equally, men of God perhaps never felt any need for socialism. Superstitions have flourished in the world in spite of godly men and women. In Hinduism which believes in God, untouchability has, till of late, held undoubted sway.

The nature of this Divine Force and its inexhaustible power have been matters of incessant quest.

My claim is that in the pursuit of that quest lies the discovery of *satyagraha*. It is not, however, claimed that all the laws of *satyagraha* have already been formulated. I cannot say either that I myself know all the laws. This I do assert that every worthy object can be achieved through *satyagraha*. It is the highest and the most potent means, the most effective weapon. I am convinced that socialism will not be reached by any other means.

*Satyagraha* can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral.

‘Socialism’ (G.)

*Haryan*, 20 July 1947

*Haryanbandhu*, 20 July 1947

## 282. HALF-KNOWLEDGE

Birla House, New Delhi,

October 25, 1947

The communists have got hold of something to keep themselves busy. Hardly one man in a thousand can be found who practises communism in everyday life. Communists have come to consider it their supreme duty, their supreme service, to create disaffection, to generate discontent and to organize strikes. They do not see whom this discontent, these strikes, will ultimately harm. Half-knowledge is one of the worst evils. The best is either full knowledge or ignorance. We are thus caught in isms and take pride in them and consider it a fashion to belong to this or that ism. People seek knowledge and instruction from Russia. Our communists seem to be in this pitiable state. I call it a pitiable rather than shameful state, for I feel that they are to be pitied, rather than blamed. For, because of our slavery, they have had no opportunity to get full knowledge. And now when we have got our freedom everybody has got an opportunity to thrust himself forward to such an extent that a sixteen-year-old boy or girl can identify himself or herself with some ism and become a leader. These people have now been fanning the fire of disunity bequeathed to us by the British. Soon they will find that they cannot control the flames. What we have to do is to find out what will suit our ignorant masses and act accordingly. For instance, we need foodgrain. If the youth of the country would only learn the techniques of farming and engaged themselves in producing more food they would have no time for quarrelling and the country would become prosperous.

Talk with Communists

*Dilhiyan Gandhiji*, Vol. I, pp. 142-3

## § 11. Towards a Stateless Society

## 283. ANARCHY PREFERABLE TO MISRULE

This letter<sup>1</sup> is obviously meant for publication. Mr. Pennington must always command respect for his great industry at his age and for his sincere advocacy of a cause he believes in. Professor Kumarappa is well able to take care of himself. He, being in a village, is not easily accessible. But whether he has any answer or not to Mr. Pennington's facts, I can say this from my own experience. Most of the 'facts' such friends as Mr. Pennington can produce may be true, and yet do not affect the conclusion arrived at by nationalists nor do those facts warrant the deductions their authors base upon them. 'One swallow does not make a summer.' Nor can high prices paid for a few acres in a rich tract prove the general prosperity of a continent. As against isolated facts of isolated prosperity stands the grim fact of the general pauperism of India as a whole. This pauperism can be seen with physical eyes by anyone who would care to wander through India's villages.

*Pax Britannica* is not a beneficial operation. It has as much value to India as the slave dwellers have in an estate whose owner keeps the slaves from fighting with one another, protects the estate from foreign inroads and makes the slaves work with a regularity that is just enough to keep the estate going in his, the owner's, interest. The slaves of this imaginary estate will, when they grow to consciousness of their position, prefer anarchy to slavery if there is no other choice. Even so should I prefer anarchy to the existing rule and its much-vaunted peace if I can have no other choice. Surely no-rule is better than bad rule. As for the friends who 'are most anxious to hold me in respect', I can only say that while I would always esteem their affection, I must be content to go without it if I cannot retain it consistently with obedience to the Inner Voice. What shall it profit me even though I may win the esteem of a whole world, if I have to lose my soul?

'No Rule v. Misrule'

*Young India*, 6 Mar. 1930

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Pennington had criticized J. C. Kumarappa's chapters on 'Public Finance and Our Poverty' which were serialized in *Young India* from 28 November 1929 to 23 January 1930. Pennington had pointed out some benefits derived by India from *Max Britannica* and expressed misgivings about the proclamation of independence.

#### 284. THE STATE AND AN IDEAL SOCIAL ORDER

November 9/10, 1934

QUESTION: ... Should *khadi* be merely a sort of humanitarian work or should we use it chiefly as an instrument of political education? Our experience has been that unless the ultimate objective is kept clearly in mind, it degenerates easily into a work of no significance.

ANSWER: The two issues of *khadi* and political organization should be kept absolutely separate. There must be no confusion. The aim of *khadi* is humanitarian; but so far as India is concerned, its effect is bound to be immensely political.

The Salvation Army wants to teach people about God. But they come with bread. For the poor bread is their God. Similarly, we should bring food into the mouths of the people through *khadi*. If we succeed in breaking the idleness of the people through *khadi*, they will begin to listen to us. Whatever else the Government might do, it does leave some food for the villagers. Unless we can bring food to them, why should the people listen to us? When we have taught them what they can do through their own efforts, then they will want to listen to us.

That trust can best be generated through *khadi*. While working out the *khadi* programme our aim should be purely humanitarian, that is, economic. We should leave out all political considerations whatsoever. But it is bound to produce important political consequences which nobody can prevent and nobody need deplore.

Q. Could we not start small battles on local and specific issues against capitalism in the villages and use them as a means of strengthening the people or bringing about a sense of co-operation among them, in preference to the *khadi* method? When we have a choice between the two, which should we prefer? If we have to sacrifice all



the work that we have built up in the villages in connection with *khadi* while fighting against the money-lender or the landed proprietor, for, say, a reduction in the rate of interest or increase in the share of agricultural produce, then what shall we do - provided the latter is more liable to evoke self-confidence among the villagers than the *khadi* method of organization?

A. It is a big proviso you have added at the end of the question. I cannot say if fights on local and specific issues against capitalists are more likely to generate the kind of determination and courage needed in a non-violent campaign. But if I concede you that point, then *khadi* would have to be sacrificed under the circumstances you quote. As a practical man, claiming to be an expert in non-violent methods, I should advise you not to go in for that type of work in order to train the masses in self-consciousness and attainment of power.

We are fighting for *swaraj* in the non-violent way. If many workers in different parts of India engage in local battles of the sort you describe, then, in times of necessity, people all over India will not be able to make a common cause in a fight for *swaraj*. Before civil disobedience can be practised on a vast scale, people must learn the art of civil or voluntary obedience. Our obedience to the Government is through fear; and the reaction against it is either violence itself or that species of it, which is cowardice. But through *khadi* we teach people the art of civil obedience to an institution which they have built up for themselves. Only when they have learnt that art can they successfully disobey something which they want to destroy in the non-violent way. This is why I should advise all workers not to fritter their fighting strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful *khadi* work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent non-co-operation. With their own exploitation, boycott of foreign cloth through picketing may easily be violent; through the use of *khadi* it is most natural and absolutely non-violent.

Q. Is love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form? If possession and non-violence cannot go

together, then do you advocate the maintenance of private ownership of land or factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the State and place the State under the control of the masses?

A. Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically, when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession. The body is our last possession. So a man can only exercise perfect love and be completely dispossessed if he is prepared to embrace death and renounce his body for the sake of human service.

But that is true in theory only. In actual life, we can hardly exercise perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal, as long as we are alive, but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

Those who own money now are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

Q. If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it?

A. That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of mankind.

Q. Why then not have State-ownership in place of private property and thus minimize violence?

A. It is better than private ownership. But that too is ob-

jectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself, and will fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

Q. Let us come to a specific instance. Supposing an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one person's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like him to be, do you not think the State would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence?

A. Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things, and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny, and confiscation ordered where necessary with or without compensation as the case demanded.

Q. What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship; as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State-ownership.

Q. Then, sir, shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the Socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will; that being the reason why do you strive for self-correction while they try to build up a system under

which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire for exploiting others?

A. While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the State has really lived for the poor.

Q. But have not those cases of trusteeship which you sometimes cite been due to your personal influence rather than to anything else? Teachers like you come infrequently. Would it not be better, therefore, to trust to some organization to effect the necessary changes in man, rather than depend upon the casual advent of men like yourself?

A. Leaving me aside, you must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teachings of each prophet like Mohammed, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. It is only because we try to keep up the permanent with the impermanent aspects of their teachings that there is so much distortion in religious practice today. But that apart, you can see that the influence of these men has sustained us after they have passed away. Moreover, what I disapprove of is an organization based on force which a State is. Voluntary organization there must be.

Q. What then, sir, is your ideal social order?

A. I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations the law of *varna* was deduced. It establishes certain spheres of action of certain people with

certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst, recognizing limitations, the law of '*varna*' admitted of no distinctions of high and low, on the one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours and on the other it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbour.

This great law has been degraded and has fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to.

Q. Do you not think that in ancient India there was much difference in economic status and social privileges between the four *varnas*?

A. That may be historically true. But misapplication or an imperfect understanding of the law must not lead to the ignoring of the law itself. By constant striving we have to enrich the inheritance left to us. This law determines the duties of man. Rights follow from a due performance of duties. It is the fashion nowadays to ignore duties and assert or rather usurp rights.

Q. If you are so keen upon reviving *varnashrama*, why do you not favour violence as the quickest means?

A. Surely the question does not arise. Definition and performance of duties rule out violence altogether. Violence becomes imperative when an attempt is made to assert rights without reference to duties.

Q. Should we not confine our pursuit of Truth to ourselves and not press it upon the world because we know that it is ultimately limited in character?

A. You cannot so circumscribe truth even if you try. Every expression of truth has in it the seeds of propagation, even as the sun cannot hide its light.

Interview with Nirmal Kumar Bose  
*The Hindustan Times*, 17 Oct. 1935

## 285. ENLIGHTENED ANARCHY

Political power, in my opinion, cannot be our ultimate aim. It is one of the means used by men for their all-round advancement. The power to control national life through national representatives is called political power. Representatives will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect as to be self-controlled. It will then be a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler. He will conduct himself in such a way that his behaviour will not hamper the well-being of his neighbours. In an ideal State there will be no political institution and therefore no political power. That is why Thoreau has said in his classic statement that that government is the best which governs the least.

'Enlightened Anarchy - A Political Ideal' (H)

*Sarvodaya*, Jan 1939

## 286. DECENTRALIZATION AND PLANNING

Panchgani,

[Before 19 June 1945]

QUESTION. Is there a 'Gandhian Plan', as Prof. Agrawal<sup>1</sup> will have it, apart from the Gandhian programme? A plan necessarily involves a time schedule within which to attain definite objectives. You have yourself formulated no such plan?

ANSWER: For me there is neither a Gandhian plan nor Gandhian programme. But it would be too pedantic for me to object to a friend's use of the word 'Gandhian'. Your objection to the word 'plan' is technically valid. But I am inclined to say there is no substance in the objection.

The basis of the Gandhian programme is decentralization. But the core of planning is centralization. Can planning and Gandhism go together?

I must dissent from the view that the core of planning is

centralization. Why should not decentralization lend itself to planning as well as centralization?

Economic planning, says Prof. Agrawal, necessitates the least amount of State control. Yet the plan he unfolds by no means envisages a Government which will govern least because the emphasis throughout is on State action— 'the responsibility of the State is very great'. Necessarily, communications, public health, education, trade and commerce, banking and currency, etc., must be State-controlled. And the plan clearly supports the nationalization of key and basic large-scale industries. How do these incompatible ideas fit in?

I detect no incompatibility in the idea of decentralizing, to the greatest extent possible, all industries and crafts, economically profitable in the villages of India, and centralizing or nationalizing the key and vital large industries required for India considered as a whole. Prof. Agrawal has taken illustrations from the present. When we have independence cum predominance of village industries in the place of city industries as at present, those who live to see that, as I hope you and I will, will face another and much healthier atmosphere and we shall see clearly what Prof. Agrawal and we see today only darkly. Today everything is controlled by a foreign State. Tomorrow the State will be controlled by the people (a very vital change in itself) and if Prof. Agrawal's plan (pardon the word) fructifies, then it is obvious that the State-control, though it appears to be big, will in reality be least. Just project in your mind's eye 700,000 villages of India dominating the centre with its few towns required in the interests of the villages.

The Gandhian programme is essentially a resuscitation of village communities, ensuring the maximum utilization of human power. It is an evolutionary process. Is it not opposed to a definitive State planning, unless, of course, cottage industrialization is content to be complementary to nationalization of industries which the problems of a post-war India may make imperative?

You have correctly described the programme standing in my name. You have lifted the term nationalization from its present setting and then put a perplexing question. I suggest

your correcting yourself and examining the contents of the term in its new village setting. The ideal is too comprehensive for our modernized mind. Mine may be all a day-dream never destined to be realized. But that would be merely begging the question. We see that in a single generation we have the so-called impossible of yesterday become the possible of today.

You have recently declaimed against the big interests who speak loud against the Government and give the lie by their support of it for the crumbs that fall to them. It is answered that Congress itself has not been averse to befriend these big interests who exploit the Congress for their ends. Can you not stop such exploitation?

The Congress has never been, and I hope never will be, averse to the big interests so long as it hopes to convert them to national use instead of being itself converted by them in the process. My very declamation referred to by you shows that the big interests have to be on the right line, if they are to subserve the interests of the masses in the end. Today they are relatively serving the foreign ruler whilst they themselves merely get the crumbs from his table. It is unfortunate. But all will never think and be alike. In non-violence, there is mutual conversion instead of coercion.

Interview with P Ramachandra Rao  
*The Hindu*, 23 June 1945

<sup>1</sup> Shri Man Narayan, his 'Gandhian Plan of Economic Development for Free India' was published in 1944

## 287. <sup>1</sup> BUILDING A STATELESS SOCIETY

New Delhi,  
September 6, 1946

Shri Shankarrao Deo writes:

People find it strange that men who once called themselves *satyagrahis* should, on becoming Ministers, resort to the use of the army and



the police. They feel it is a violation of *ahimsa*, whether accepted as a creed or as a policy. It would seem they are right. This contradiction between the belief and the practice of Congress Ministers confuses our workers and they find it difficult to face the critics, inside the Congress and those outside the Congress who want to make capital out of it.

By and large the *ahimsa* of the Congress has been the *ahimsa* of the weak. This was the only thing possible under the prevailing conditions in India. . . . I admit that there can be no objection to people who accept *ahimsa* only as a policy accepting positions of power. Thus many Congressmen have accepted positions in the Government and you have permitted them to do so. . . . But having won power through *ahimsa*, how should we practise *ahimsa* in such a way that government becomes redundant? If you do not suggest a way, *satyagraha* will be deemed to be an insufficient means for the end we seek.

I think the answer is easy. For some time now I have been saying that the words 'truth and non-violence' should be removed from the Congress constitution. If we proceed on the assumption that whether these words are removed from the Congress constitution or not we certainly have become removed from truth and *ahimsa*, we shall be able to judge independently whether a certain action is right or wrong.

I am convinced that so long as the army or the police continues to be used for conducting the administration, we shall remain subservient to the British or some other foreign power, irrespective of whether the power is in the hands of the Congress or others. Let us suppose that Congress ministries do not have faith in *ahimsa*. Let us suppose further that Hindus, Muslims and others seek protection from the army or the police. In that case they will continue to get such protection. Then these Congress Ministers who are votaries of *ahimsa* and do not like to seek help from the army or the police may resign. This means that so long as people have not learnt to settle their quarrels themselves, *goondaism* will continue and we shall never be able to generate the true strength of *ahimsa* in us.

Now the question is how to generate such strength. I answered this question in the *Harijan* of August 4 in my reply to a letter from Ahmedabad. So long as we do not develop the strength to die bravely, with love in our hearts, we cannot develop in us the non-violence of the brave.

Would there be State power in an ideal society or would such a society be Stateless? I think the question is futile. If we continue to work towards the building of such a society, to some extent it is bound to be realized and to that extent people will benefit by it. Euclid has defined a straight line as having no breadth, but no one has yet succeeded in drawing such a line and no one ever will. Still we can progress in geometry only by postulating such a line. This is true of every ideal.

We might remember though that a Stateless society does not exist anywhere in the world. If such a society is possible it can be established first only in India. For attempts have been made in India towards bringing about such a society. We have not so far shown that supreme heroism. The only way is for those who believe in it to set the example

'Congress Ministries and *Ahimsa*' (H.)

*Harjan*, 15 Sept. 1946

*Harjan Sevak*, 15 Sept 1946

## 288. WORLD FEDERATION, DEMOCRACY, AND *RAMARAJYA*

New Delhi,  
July 4, 1947

Brothers and Sisters,

Some people ask me if what has happened and what is happening and the Dominion Status that we are about to get will lead to *Ramarajya*. Those who put the question are usually sarcastic and I have to admit that I cannot say that all this will lead to *Ramarajya*. All the signs I see are against it. The country has been divided and there will be two Dominions and, if they are hostile to each other, how can we expect the establishment of *Ramarajya*? Of course Dominion Status does not imply subservience to the British. It is as good as independence. But the other Dominions in the British Commonwealth are more or less of the same race. Since India is an Asian country, how can it remain a Dominion? If all the countries of the world were to become such Dominions, that would be

a different matter and then *Ramarajya* could be brought about. But what has come about cannot lead to *Ramarajya* or the Kingdom of God. The British Government had originally intended to transfer power to Indian hands by June 30, 1948. But now they have decided that the sooner they get out the better it would be. But how can they do that? So they came to the conclusion that if Dominion Status were granted to the divided India there would be no risks because then they would still have links with us.

I do not want India to be a frog in the well, unaware of what happens outside the well. Jawaharlal and other leaders have said that we will not be hostile to any country. We shall have friendship for all including the British. Do they then want a world federation? As I said at the Asian Relations Conference, a world federation is possible of realization and in that case it would not be necessary for countries to maintain armed forces. Some countries today describe themselves as democratic but of course one does not become a democrat by simply saying so. What is the need for an army where there is rule by the people? Where the army rules the people cannot rule. There can be no world federation of countries ruled by armies. The military dictatorships of Germany and Japan had tried to inveigle various countries into friendship with them. But the deception did not last long. Today I look around and find *Ramarajya* nowhere.

People ask me if the rule of the sword and the bullet that prevails today is not the result of my teaching of truth and non-violence for thirty-two years. But does this then mean that for thirty-two years I have prevailed through lies and hypocrisy? Does it mean that the millions of people who imbibed the lesson of *ahimsa* from me have after thirty-two years suddenly become liars and murderers? I have admitted that our *ahimsa* was the *ahimsa* of the weak. But in reality weakness and *ahimsa* cannot go together. It should therefore be described not as *ahimsa* but as passive resistance. But the *ahimsa* I advocated was not the *ahimsa* of the weak while passive resistance is only for the weak. Then passive resistance is a preparation for active and armed resistance. As a result the violence the people had been harbouring in their hearts has now suddenly erupted.

Our passive resistance has not been a complete failure. We have all but won our freedom. The violence we see today is the violence of cowards. There is also such a thing as the violence of the brave. If four or five men enter into a fight and die by the sword, there is violence in it but it is the violence of the brave. But when ten thousand armed men attack a village of unarmed people and slaughter them along with their wives and children it is the violence of cowards. America unleashed its atom bomb over Japan. That was the violence of the cowards. The non-violence of the brave is a thing worth seeing. I want to see that non-violence before I die. For this we should have inner strength. It is a unique weapon. If people had realized its beauty, all the life and property that have been lost would never have been lost.

If people had learnt the lesson of *ahimsa* which I had been trying to impart to them over the last 32 years, there would have been no need at present for rationing of food and cloth. If we are thoughtful in consuming food and cloth, there can be no scarcity of either in India. If people learnt to live truthfully and help each other, there would be no need for us to look towards the Civil Service. The late Mr. Montagu had described the Civil Service as a wooden structure. Civil servants do not consider themselves servants of the people nor are they employed for the service of the people. They are here somehow to keep the foreign rule going. Ensconced in their offices they issue orders through peons. If we could learn to stand on our feet and give up dependence on the Civil Service, there would be no need in India either for rationing or for the Civil Service today. Some kind of civil service no doubt will be needed for running the administration. If civil servants could change with the times and run the administration to serve the people, then a truly democratic regime could be brought about.

Speech at Prayer Meeting (H.)

*Prarthana Pravachan*, Vol. I, pp. 217 20

289 A TALISMAN

[August 1947]

I will give you a talisman Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and 'spiritually starving millions'?

Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away

M K GANDHI<sup>1</sup>

'A Note

From a facsimile *Mahatma* Vol VIII p 89

<sup>1</sup> The signature is in the Devanagari and Bengali scripts

290 MY MESSAGE

September 5, 1947

My life is my message

GANDHI

Message to Shanti Sena Dal<sup>1</sup>

*The Hindustan Standard*, 7 Sept 1947

<sup>1</sup> Written in Bengali this was given to Devtosh Das Gupta Secretary Shanti Sena Dal who called on Gandhi 'Blessing the soldiers of peace', he said that they should courageously face any odds that might come in their way



# Chronology

## M. K. Gandhi (1869-1948)

- 1869 2 Oct. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born into a Vaishya family at Porbander in Kathiawar, Gujarat; the youngest of three sons of Karamchand Gandhi, Prime Minister in Porbander, Rajkot, and Vanakner States, and his fourth wife Putlibai.
- 1876 Goes to Rajkot with parents; attends primary school there until twelfth year. Betrothal to Kasturbai, daughter of Gokuldas Makanji.
- 1882 Marries Kasturbai Makanji.
- 1884 Experiments in meat-eating and agnosticism.
- 1888 Spring Birth of Harilal.
- 4 Sept. Despite disapproval of caste elders, sails for England to study.
- 6 Nov. Enrols as law student at Inner Temple, London.
- 1889 Nov Meets H. P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society  
Becomes acquainted with the *Bhagavad Gita*, *The Light of Asia*, and the Sermon on the Mount.
- 1890 19 Sept. Becomes executive member of the London Vegetarian Society
- 1891 26 Mar. Enrols as associate member of the London Theosophical Society.
- 10 June Called to the Bar and enrols in the High Court of London.
- 12 June Sails for India.
- 1892 Spring Birth of Manilal.
- 14 May Receives permission to practise law in Kathiawar.  
Fails to establish successful practice.  
Settles in Rajkot as legal draughtsman.

- 1893 Apr. Sails for South Africa as legal adviser to Dada Abdullah & Company.
- June Ordered off train to Pretoria.  
Makes resolve to resist racial discrimination non-violently.
- July Kicked off footpath near President Kruger's house, but refuses to sue the assailant.
- 1894 Apr. Studies religious literature, including the Bible, the Koran, and Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*.
- 22 Aug. Organizes Natal Indian Congress.
- 3 Sept. Enrolled as barrister in the High Courts of Natal and the Transvaal over opposition of European lawyers.
- 1895 Apr. Visits Trappist monastery near Durban.
- May Appeals to Natal Assembly and to Lord Ripon against re-indenture clause in Indian Immigration Bill.
- 16 Dec. Issues *The Indian Franchise: An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa*.
- 1896 5 June Sails for India.  
Addresses meetings on behalf of Indians in South Africa.
- 30 Nov. Sails for South Africa with his family.
- 1897 13 Jan. Arrives in Durban and is attacked by a mob.
- 20 Jan. Declines to prosecute assailants.
- May Birth of Ramdas.
- 1898 Petitions local and Imperial authorities regarding discriminatory laws.
- 1899 Dec. Organizes Indian Ambulance Corps to serve in the Boer War.
- 1900 22 May Birth of Devadas.
- 1901 18 Oct. Sails with family to India.



- 1901 27 Dec. Offers resolution on South Africa at Indian National Congress.
- 1902 Feb. Stays with Gokhale for a month in Calcutta.  
Fails to establish successful law practice in Rajkot.  
Moves to Bombay where he pursues legal work.
- 20 Nov. Returns with family to South Africa in response to call to champion Indian cause against anti-Asiatic legislation in the Transvaal.
- 1903 Feb. Enrols as Attorney of Supreme Court of the Transvaal.  
Opens law office in Johannesburg
- 4 June Launches *Indian Opinion*.
- 1904 Oct. Reads Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.  
Dec. Founds the Phoenix Settlement near Durban.
- 1905 May Begins learning Tamil.
- 9 Aug. Calls for revision of Bill levying poll tax against Natal Indians.
- 19 Aug. Calls for united opposition to Bengal partition and supports boycott of British goods.
- 1906 12 May Advocates Home Rule for India.
- June July Engages in ambulance work during Zulu Rebellion  
Vow of chastity.
- 11 Sept. Addresses mass meeting of Indians at Empire Theatre in Johannesburg calling for withdrawal of Asiatic Registration Bill.
- 3 Oct. Sails for England to seek redress from British government.
- 7 Nov. Addresses members of Parliament.
- Dec. Returns to South Africa.
- 1907 Jan.-Feb. Writes series of eight articles on 'Ethical Religion'.
- 14 July Calls upon Indians not to submit to re-registration.
- 31 July Explains significance of Passive Resistance.  
General Strike follows.

- 1907 28 Dec. Conducts his own trial and appears in defence of pickets, ordered to leave Transvaal within forty-eight hours. Later, speaks at meeting in Government Square.
- 1908 10 Jan. Adopts term '*Satyagraha*' in place of 'Passive Resistance'. Sentenced to two months' imprisonment. Released on 31 January along with all other *satyagrahis*.
- 10 Feb. Assaulted and nearly killed by Mir Alam Khan and other Pathans. Appeals from his sick-bed that assailants be forgiven, and asks Asiatics to give their finger-prints voluntarily.
- 16 Aug. Addresses mass meeting and encourages the burning of registration certificates.
- 23 Aug. Mass meeting in Johannesburg in which more registration certificates are burnt, Mir Alam, Gandhi's assailant, and other Pathans admit their error and resolve 'to fight to the end'.
- 7 Oct. Arrested at Volksrust for entering Transvaal without registration certificate. Sentenced to two months' hard labour. Released on 12 December.
- 1909 16 Jan. Arrested again at Volksrust for failing to produce registration certificate. On deportation, returns and is re-arrested but released on bail.
- 25 Feb. Arrested at Volksrust on same charge. Sentenced to three months. Released on 24 May.
- 23 June Sails for England.
- 10 July Arrives in London. With assistance of Lord Ampthill, seeks to educate influential British leaders.
- 13 Nov. Returns to South Africa. *En route* writes *Hind Swaraj* and translates Tolstoy's 'Letter to a Hindoo'.
- 1910 4 Apr. Sends Tolstoy a copy of *Indian Home Rule (Hind Swaraj)*.
- 8 May Tolstoy replies that Passive Resistance is of greatest importance for India and humanity.

- 1910 30 May Establishes Tolstoy Farm Ashram on 1,100 acres provided by Herman Kallenbach.
- 1911 22 Apr. Smuts agrees to assurances demanded by Indians in reciprocation of suspension of *Satyagraha* Movement.
- 1912 22 Oct. Gokhale arrives in Cape Town. Gandhi accompanies him during a five-week tour. Gives up European dress and milk and restricts his diet to fresh and dried fruit.
- 1912 Apr. Kasturbai joins the *Satyagraha* struggle.
- 15 Sept. *Satyagraha* is revived. Party of twelve men and four women, including Kasturbai Gandhi, leave Durban for Volksrust.
- 23 Sept. Kasturbai is arrested along with other *satyagrahis*. Sentenced to three months' imprisonment at hard labour.
- 28 Oct. Leads march from Newcastle with 1,700 *satyagrahis*.
- 6 Nov. With 2,221 marchers, arrives at Volksrust border. Arrested at Palmford railway station. Others cross the border.
- 7 Nov. At Volksrust, released on bail and rejoins 2,037 marchers.
- 8 Nov. Arrested at Standerton, released on recognition. March continues.
- 9 Nov. Arrested at Teakworth and taken to Balfour.
- 11 Nov. Sentenced at Dundee to nine months' imprisonment at hard labour on charges of inducing a strike.
- 18 Dec. Released. From time of release till settlement takes only one meal a day and wears indentured labourer's dress.
- 1914 13 Jan. Begins negotiations with General Smuts, resulting in a compromise on 22 January.
- 22 Jan. Suspends *Satyagraha* following agreement with Smuts.

- 1914 18 July Sails for London *en route* to India, leaving South Africa for the last time
- 6 Aug. Arrives in England two days after World War I begins.
- 8 Aug. Given reception at Hotel Cecil by English and Indian friends; Jinnah, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarojini Naidu are among those present.
- 13 Aug. Organizes Ambulance Corps of Indian students in London.
- 19 Dec. Owing to ill health sails for India. Begins learning Bengali.
- 1915 9 Jan. Arrival in Bombay. Awarded Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal for ambulance services.
- 3 Mar. At Poona meeting to mourn death of Gokhale.
- 7 Apr. Goes to Rishikesh, and visits Swargashram.
- 20 May Establishes Satyagraha Ashram (later known as Sabarmati Ashram) at Ahmedabad.
- Sept. Admits untouchable family to Satyagraha Ashram.
- 1916 Tours India and Burma, travelling third class on railway.
- 6 Feb. Speaks at Benares University.
- 21 Oct. At Bombay Provincial Conference held at Ahmedabad, Gandhi proposes election of Jinnah as President.
- 26 Dec. Attends Indian National Congress at Lucknow.
- 29 Dec. Presides over All-India Common Script and Common Language Conference in Lucknow.
- 1917 Idea of using spinning-wheel to produce hand-made cloth, on large scale takes root in his mind.
- 10 Apr. Begins working with problems of indigo farmers in Champaran, leading to a workers' resolution in August.
- 31 Aug. Tells Mahadev Desai, 'I have got in you the man I wanted.'

- 1917 3 Oct. Champaran Committee reaches compromise with planters.
- 1918 20 Feb. Presides over annual gathering of Bhagini Samaj in Bombay, speaking on women's education.
- 22 Feb. Leads *Satyagraha* campaign on behalf of mill workers in Ahmedabad. Settlement reached 18 March.
- 22 Mar. Inaugurates Kheda *Satyagraha* in Nadiad. Successfully terminated 29 June.
- 27 Apr. Attends Viceroy's War Conference at Delhi, addressing it in Hindustani.  
Tours to raise recruits for British armed forces.
- 14 Nov. Opening of Gujarat Swadeshi Store.
- 1919 24 Feb. Notifies Viceroy of *Satyagraha* Pledge.
- Mar. Issues first '*Satyagraha* Leaflet', quoting Thoreau.
- 19 Mar. Speaks at meeting of Madras Labour Union, B. P. Wadia presiding.
- 6 Apr. Inaugurates all-India *Satyagraha* Movement: country-wide *hartal*
- 7 Apr. First issue of *Satyagrahi* released without registration.
- 10 12 Apr. Arrested on way to Delhi for refusal to comply with order not to enter the Punjab. Outbreaks of violence in several towns accompany his escort back to Bombay.
- 13 Apr. Massacre at Amritsar.
- 14 Apr. Commencement of three-day penitential fast.  
Leads *Satyagraha* campaign against Rowlatt Act.  
Confesses his 'Himalayan miscalculation' regarding mass *Satyagraha*. Martial law declared in Punjab.
- 18 Apr. Suspends *Satyagraha*.
- Sept Assumes editorship of *Navajivan*.
- Oct. Assumes editorship of *Young India*.

- 1919 4 Nov. Received in Golden Temple at Amritsar.
- 24 Nov. Presides over all-India Khilafat Conference at Delhi.
- 1920 2 Apr. Rabindranath Tagore visits Sabarmati Ashram.
- 1 Aug. Addresses letter to Viceroy, returning Kaiser-i-Hind, Zulu War, and Boer War medals.
- 31 Aug. Takes pledge to wear *khadi* for life.
- 8 Sept. Special session of Indian National Congress accepts his programme of non-co-operation to secure redress of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs.
- Dec. Nagpur Congress session adopts his resolution declaring object of Congress to be attainment of *Swaraj* by legitimate and peaceful means.
- 1921 30 Mar. In Vijayanagaram. pleads for Hindi to be made lingua franca of India.
- Apr. Launches programme to set up twenty *lakhs* of *charkhas* in the country.
- 31 July Leads campaign for complete boycott of foreign cloth.  
Presides over huge bonfire at Bombay.
- 31 Oct. Takes vow of daily spinning.
- 19 Nov. Fasts for five days as protest against communal riots.
- Dec. Mass *Satyagraha* campaign begins. Invested with full powers by Congress. Many Congress leaders arrested.
- 1922 4 Feb. Riots at Chauri Chaura.
- 12 Feb. Commences five-day fast as protest against violence.  
Abandons plan of *Satyagraha* Movement.
- 10 Mar. Arrested for sedition at Sabarmati. Sentenced to six years' imprisonment.
- 1923 26 Nov. In prison begins writing *Satyagraha in South Africa*.
- 1924 12 Jan. Operated upon for appendicitis.

- 1924 4 Feb. Ordered released from prison.
- 12 Feb. Requests Mahomed Yakub to desist from moving Assembly resolution recommending award of Nobel Peace Prize to him.
- 18 May In first public appearance after release from gaol, presides over Buddha Jayanti celebrations in Bombay.
- 17 Sept. Begins twenty-one-day fast on behalf of Hindu-Muslim unity. Ends fast on 8 October.
- 1925 15 Feb. Inaugurates a national school and a Jain hostel at Rajkot.
- 2 July Bakr-i-Id day riots break out in Kidderpore, Calcutta. Gandhi, with Abul Kalam Azad, visits trouble spots, pacifies both communities.
- 22 Sept. Founds All-India Spinners' Association.
- 7 Nov. Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn) joins the Ashram at Sabarmati.
- 24 Nov. Announces seven days' fast for misdeeds of Ashram inmates.
- 29 Nov. Begins writing *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*.
- 1927 Jan. Nov. Extensive *khas* tour through North and South India.
- Nov. Visits Ceylon.
- 1928 12 Feb. Bardoli peasants refuse to pay taxes as an act of *Satyagraha*. Gandhi presides over successful settlement on 6 August.
- Dec. Moves resolution at Calcutta Congress in favour of Independence if Dominion Status is not granted by end of 1929.
- 1929 3 Feb. Completes *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*.
- 4 Mar. Arrested for burning foreign cloth. Released later on personal recognition.
- 20 Aug. Declines Congress Presidentship. Suggests Jawaharlal Nehru instead.

- 1929 27 Dec. Declares for complete Indian independence at Lahore Congress.
- 1930 26 Jan. Declaration of Independence prepared by him is proclaimed all over India.
- 12 Mar. Begins Salt March from Sabarmati to Dandi.
- 6 Apr. Breaks salt law on the beach at Dandi. Launches *Satyagraha* throughout India.
- 18 Apr. Riots at Chittagong.
- 5 May Arrested at Karadi and imprisoned at Yeravda gaol without trial. *Hartal* all over India. Over 100,000 are gaoled before close of year.
- 1931 26 Jan. Released together with other Congress leaders.
- 4 Mar Gandhi Irwin Pact signed.
- 8 Apr At Amritsar, discusses with Sikhs solutions to communalism.
- 2 Aug. Opens family temple of Chinubhai Madhavlal to untouchables in Ahmedabad.
- 12 Sept. Arrives in London to attend Round Table Conference, to meet with British leaders and elucidate the need for India's complete independence.
- 26 Sept. Talks with representatives of cotton industry.
- 27 Sept. Receives deputations from unemployed workers at Bradford.
- 9 Oct. Meets Madame Montessori.
- 23 Oct. Addresses a gathering at Eton College.
- 24 Oct. Delivers a talk to Oxford dons.
- 6 Nov. Mr and Mrs George Bernard Shaw call on Gandhi.
- 14 Dec. Sails to India after visiting Romain Rolland in Switzerland.
- 1932 4 Jan. Arrested in Bombay after his draft resolution for resumption of *Satyagraha* is adopted by the Congress Working Committee. Detained at Yeravda gaol.



- 1932 20 Sept. Begins fast unto death as protest against separate electorates for untouchables.
- 24 Sept. Yeravda Pact signed by high and low caste Hindus in the presence of Gandhi.
- 26 Sept. Concludes fast.
- 1933 Feb. While in prison, founds the Harijan Sevak Sangh and *Harijan*.
- 8 May Begins fast 'for the purification of self and associates'. Is released from gaol.
- 9 May Announces suspension of *Satyagraha* Movement for six weeks and calls on Government to withdraw its Ordinances.
- 29 May Breaks fast after twenty-one days.
- 26 July Announces disbanding of Satvagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad.  
Prepares to march to Ras with thirty-three companions on 1 August.
- 1 Aug. Arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment for disobeying restraint order.
- 16 Aug. Begins fast because he is not allowed to work for untouchables while in prison. Four days later removed to hospital.
- 23 Aug. Released unconditionally from prison.
- 1933 4 Nov. Extensive tour on behalf of *Harijans* in North and South India, last month of which is undertaken on foot.
- June
- 1934 25 June Escapes bomb attempt on his life.
- 17 Sept. Announces decision to retire from politics from 1 October to engage in development of village industries, Harijan service, and education through basic crafts.
- 24 Oct. Inaugurates All-India Village Industries Association.
- 30 Oct. Resigns from Congress.

- 1936 30 Apr. Settles at Sevagram near Wardha in the Central Provinces, making it his headquarters.
- 1937 22 Oct. Presides over Educational Conference at Wardha
- 1938 3-5 Feb. Attends Congress Working Committee at Wardha.  
Oct. Tours North-west Frontier.
- 1939 3 Mar. Commences fast unto death at Rajkot to secure local ruler's adherence to his promise to reform administration. Ends 7 March on Viceroy's intervention.  
23 July Writes letter to Hitler (undelivered).
- 1940 Attends frequent Congress Working Committee Meetings where he plays an active role  
Oct. Suspends *Haryan* and allied weeklies following official demand for pre-censorship on the subject of *Satyagraha*.  
17 Oct. Launches limited civil disobedience campaign in protest against India's enforced participation in World War II
- 1941 13 Dec. Completes *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*.
- 1942 18 Jan. Revives *Haryan* and weekly journals.  
27 Mar. Meets Sir Stafford Cripps in New Delhi. Later declares his proposals to be a 'post-dated cheque'.  
8 Aug. Launches 'Quit India' Movement.  
9 Aug. Arrested and taken to Aga Khan's Palace, Poona.  
15 Aug. Death of Mahadev Desai from heart failure in Aga Khan's Palace.
- 1943 10 Feb. Begins twenty-one-day fast as an appeal for justice. Ends on 3 March.
- 1944 22 Feb. Death of Kasturbai Gandhi while in prison at Poona.  
6 May Released from prison because of ill health. Devotes himself to Constructive Programme.

- 1944 9 Sept Begins talks with Jinnah
- 27 Sept Announces breakdown of talks with Jinnah
- 1945 17 Mar Declares Vinoba Bhave and Kishorelal Mashruwala as his successors in Sevagram Ashram
- 25 June Attends Simla Conference
- 19 Dec Lays foundation stone of C F Andrews Memorial Hospital at Shantiniketan
- 1945 6 Dec Tours Bengal and Assam
- Jan
- 1946 Jan Tours South India for anti-untouchability and the learning of Hindustani
- Feb
- 10 Feb Once again revives *Harjan* and allied journals
- Apr Participates in political talks with Cabinet Mission in Delhi
- 12 May Attends Simla Conference
- 23 June Advises Congress not to enter Interim Government proposed by Viceroy
- 24 June Meets Cabinet Mission
- 29 June Leaves Delhi for Poona by rail Attempts made to derail train *en route*
- 7 July Addresses Congress meeting at Bombay
- 16 Aug Four days' rioting starts in Calcutta as the consequence of 'Direct Action' called by Muslim League
- 27 Aug Cables warning to British Government against repetition of 'Bengal Tragedy'
- 15 Oct Muslim League enters Interim Government
- Nov Tours riot-torn East Bengal on foot for four months
- 1947 2 Jan Says 'All around me is utter darkness'
- 3 29 Jan Leaves Srirampur on walking tour Tours riot-affected areas in Bihar

- 1947 29 Mar. Lord Mountbatten, last Viceroy of India, arrives in India.
- 1 2 Apr. Addresses Asian Relations Conference in Delhi.
- 15 Apr. With Jinnah, issues joint appeal for communal peace.
- 5 May Denies that communal division of India is inevitable.
- 2 June Viceroy's Partition plan revealed. Congress Working Committee accepts.
- 6 June Writes to Mountbatten to persuade Jinnah to settle amicably all outstanding points with Congress.
- 12 June Addresses Congress Working Committee.
- 15 Aug. British India divided into two self-governing dominions; Gandhi rejoices for the deliverance from British rule, while deploring India's partition  
Mass migration of Hindus and Muslims accompanied by widespread violence.
- 1 Sept. In Calcutta begins fast unto death. Fast broken after local peace is restored four days later.
- 1948 13 Jan. Begins fast in New Delhi on behalf of communal unity.
- 17 Jan. Central Peace Committee formed and decides on 'Peace Pledge'.
- 18 Jan. Ends fast.
- 20 Jan. Bomb explosion at Birla House.
- 30 Jan. Struck by an assassin's bullet while on his way to evening prayer meeting. With hands folded in prayer and a gesture of forgiveness, he passed from this life with the words 'Hey Ram, Hey Ram' on his lips.

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# Glossary

*adharma* amoral, unrighteous  
*advaita* non-duality, monism  
*ahimsa* non-injury, non-violence, harmlessness, renunciation of the will to kill and the intention to hurt, abstention from any hostile thought, word or act, non-coercion  
*amanritam* modesty  
*amrit*, nectar  
*anandi* bliss, joy  
*anasakti*, selflessness, selfless action  
*anasakti yoga*, योग (discipline) of selfless action  
*aparigraha* non-possession, renunciation  
*artha* politics *raison d'état*, interest, material welfare  
*arya(n)* literally, 'the holy' or 'the noble' originally the title of the *Rishis*, those who walked the *Aryamarga* or noble path of holiness  
*ashram* a spiritual fellowship or community  
*asteya* non-stealing  
*asuri* demon  
*attai ida* clinging to a separate self, illusory personal identity  
  
*bania* the caste of traders and farmers  
*bhajan* devotional hymn or chant  
*bhakti*, devotion, faith, adoration of the divine  
*bhangi* member of a caste associated with sweeping and scavenging  
*bigha* a measure of land  
*brahmachari*, a follower of *brahmacharya*, an exemplar of chastity  
*brahmacharya*, fidelity, chastity, the first of the four stages of life  
*brahmanidya*, knowledge of *Brahman* the Ultimate Reality  
*brahmin* member of the first of the four castes whose chief duty is the study of the Vedas and the performance of sacrifices

*charkha*, spinning wheel  
*crore*, ten million

*dharma*, duty, righteousness, moral law  
 social and personal morality, natural law, natural obligation  
*dhori* a single piece of cloth worn wrapped around the waist  
*duragraha*, persistence in wrong-doing  
*duragrah*, one who persists in wrong-doing  
  
*fakir* a Muslim ascetic, a mendicant

*ganga*, temple  
*goonda*, rowdy, vagabond  
*goondaism*, rowdiness  
*goseia*, service of the cow  
*gram panchayat* village council  
*grhastha*, householder, family life  
*grhastha-ashrama*, the stage of life of the householder  
*guru*, spiritual preceptor and guide  
*gurubhakti*, adoration of the Guru

*harijan*, literally, 'child of God', the name Gandhi gave to the untouchables  
*hartal*, boycott, strike (cessation of work)  
*hathayogi*, one who attempts to achieve spiritual states through physical austerities and yogic techniques  
*himsa*, injury; violence

*karma*, moral law, the law of ethical causation and moral retribution, causality action  
*karma yoga* (*karmayoga*), spiritual realization through social action  
*khadi* (*khaddar*), hand-spun cloth  
*krishak*, cultivator  
*kshatriya*, a member of the second or warrior caste

*lakh* (*lac*), a hundred thousand  
*lathi* iron-bound bamboo stick used by police

*mahatma*, great soul  
*mahayajna*, great sacrifice  
*mantra*, sacred syllable or incantation

*murcha*, hot green or red pepper  
*moksha*, liberation, emancipation, enlightenment; spiritual freedom and redemption; salvation

*nat talim* (*nayee talim*), a new mode of education

*neti, neti*, literally, 'not this, not this' - a philosophical exercise for negating relative truths

*nirvana*, emancipation from conditioned existence

*panchayat*, five-member village council

*panchayat raj*, rule by Panchayat

*pandal*, platform

*paradeshi*, foreign

*paradharma*, the duty of another

*Parameshwar(a)*, the Supreme Self, the One Reality

*parigraha*, grasping, clinging

*patel*, a community or sub-caste in Gujarat

*purna swaraj*, complete self-rule, total independence

*purnavatara*, full incarnation of divinity; a perfect *Avatar*

*purushartha*, the epitome of divine manhood, one of the four ends of human life

*rajas*, passion, restlessness

*ramanama*, chanting of the name of Rama

*ramarajya*, the rule of Rama, the Golden Age, the ideal form of government; the kingdom of God on earth\*

*ratnachintamani*, the wish-fulfilling gem

*rattan*, a cane

*ravuma*, errand man

*rishi*, seer

*rta*, sacrificial moral order of the cosmos

*ryot* (*raiyyat*), Indian peasant

*ryotwari*, system of land revenue

*sadhu*, ascetic, recluse

*samadhi*, the highest state of meditation, oneness with the divine

*samaj*, an association, religious or secular

*samsara*, the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth

*sangh(a)*, a voluntary association

*sannyasi*, one who has renounced the world

*sardar*, a term of respect usually applied to a Sikh

*sarvodaya*, universal welfare; social good, public interest

*sat*, absolute archetypal reality; eternal truth

*satmik*, the quality of truth, goodness, and purity

*satyagraha*, non-violent resistance, a relentless search for truth, truth-force, holding on to truth

*satyagrahi*, one who offers *satyagraha*  
*seva samiti*, social service organization

*shri*, a title of respect

*shudra* (*sudra*), servant or menial caste

*smriti*, traditional accounts imparted orally, from the word *smriti* or 'memory'; the ceremonial writings of the Hindus, less sacred than the Vedas, which are *sruti* or 'revealed'

*swadeshi*, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, patriotism

*svadharma* (*svadharma*), self-chosen destiny or obligation

*swaraj* (*swarajya*), freedom, self-rule, political independence

*takli*, spinning-wheel

*talati*, village official

*taluk*, sub-division of a province

*tapas*, austerities, penance

*tapascharya*, meditation and austerities

*tapasya*, practice of *tapas*

*til*, sesame

*topi*, headwear

*vaid*, physician, practitioner of *Ayurveda*

*vaishnava*, a devotee of Vishnu, an exemplar of devotion

*vaishya*, the merchant caste

*vanaprastha*, the third stage of life, that of the forest dweller or recluse

*varna*, caste

*varnadharma*, the duties of a caste

*varnashrama*, the organization of society into four castes and four stages of life

*videshi*, foreign

*vidyapith*, educational institution

*yajna*, sacrifice

*yoga*, spiritual discipline; union with the divine; skill in action

*yogi(n)*, one following a spiritual discipline



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